

"A plain, frame church, cozy and comfortable."— Page 103.

GERARD: 175

THE CALL OF THE CHURCH-BELL.

7-H
A STORY.

BY MISS LUCINDA B. HELM.

*"I purpose to build a house unto the name of the
Lord my God." 1 Kings v. 5.*

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY BELOVED BROTHER,
THOMAS P. HELM,

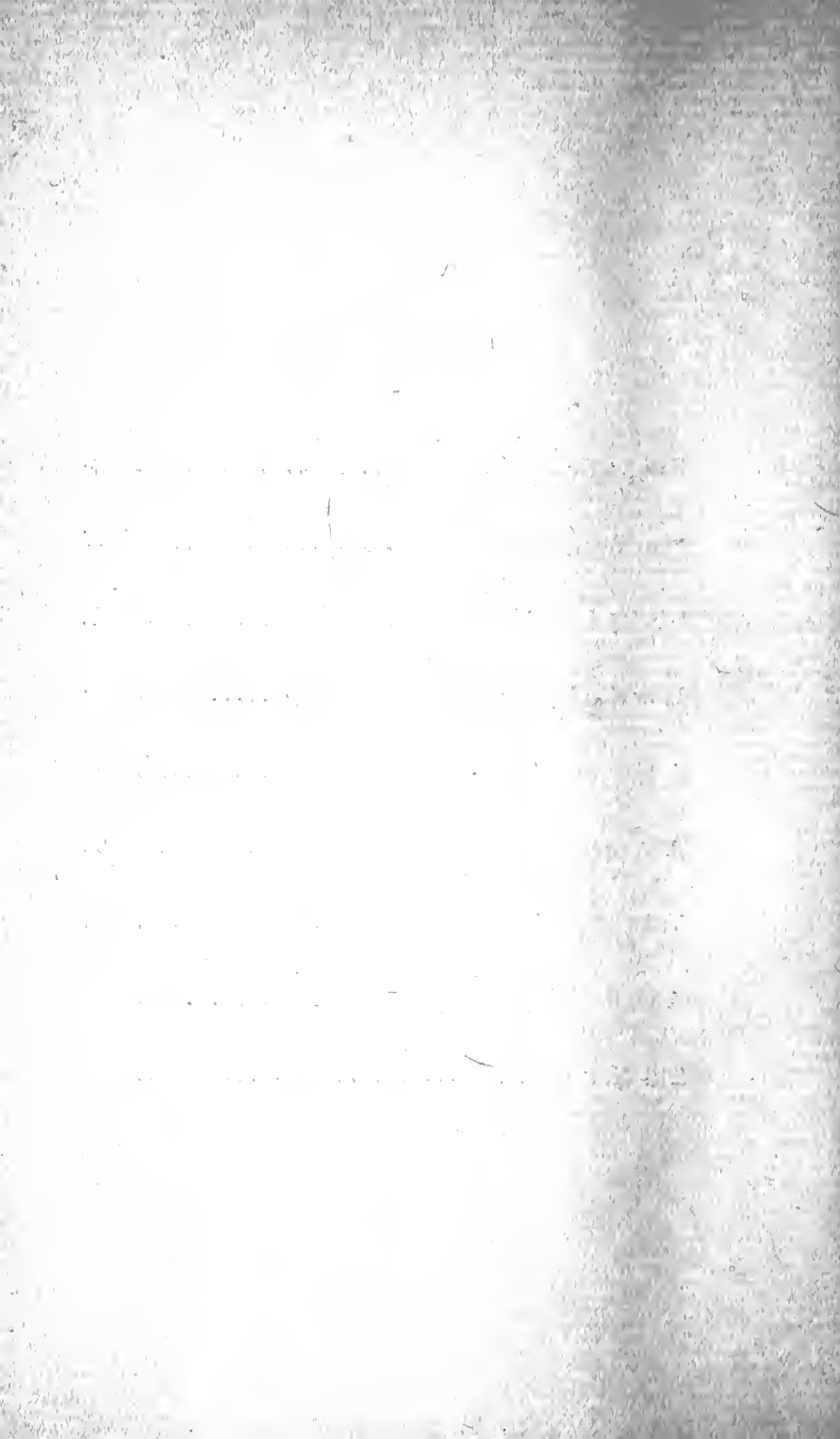
I Dedicate this Little Book,

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THE ASSISTANCE AND
ENCOURAGEMENT HE SO KINDLY GAVE
ME IN ITS PREPARATION.

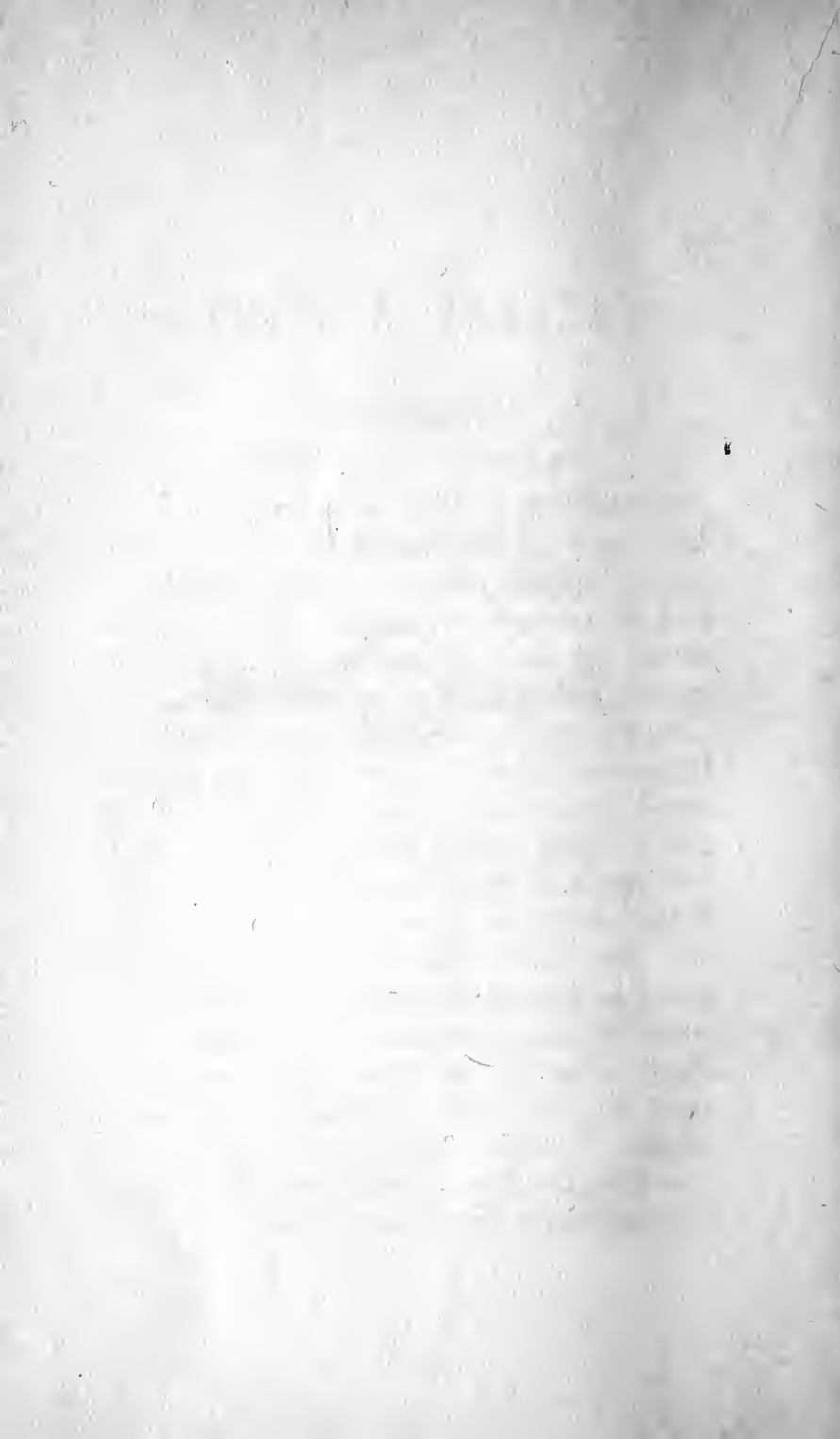


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→ GERARD: A STORY. ←

Chapter I.

THE LITTLE BOY IN CHURCH.

GERARD'S mother always took him to church. She began when he was very small. Gerard never objected to going; he took it as a matter of course. When friends asked his mother why she took him to church, she did not enter into a discussion as to whether or not little children ought to be taken to church before they can understand sermons addressed to adults, for good people differ on that point; she simply said that she was afraid to leave him at home. Whether she had some idea, not reasoned out, that habit was very strong—that it was a firm mold in which the impressible mind of infancy would harden into like shape, and she was afraid not to try to mold her boy's mind into the form she wanted it to take, instead of leaving it to adjust itself to uncontrolled events; or whether she simply meant Gerard was such

a bad little boy she was afraid, if she left him at home, he would get into mischief, I do not pretend to say. But Gerard did not look like a bad boy. He was a handsome boy, with bright, truth-telling, blue eyes, with a wide-awake expression that showed very plainly his mother was right when she said: "Gerard must be at something; if he did not have one thing to do he would do another." And the majority of little boys are very like him, in my opinion. However it was, she always took Gerard to church. And this is the way he spent his time in church: As long as the singing lasted, no little mouse could be stiller than this little boy, who fastened his eyes on the choir and listened as if he were absorbing the music into his very soul—and it may be he did. But when the preacher commenced, then Gerard commenced. The preacher was not by any means tiresome. Older people liked him very much, and occasionally Gerard caught an idea from him. He spoke of Moses; the name was familiar to Gerard, and he listened to hear about the baby in the bulrushes; but the preacher spoke of the great lawgiver—then he thought he might

as well feel for his marbles. He felt in his right-hand pocket; he could not find his marbles. He could not find his nails, either. He felt in both pockets. He felt in great consternation, until he remembered he had on his Sunday trousers. Then he took his hands out of his pockets, and sat very quiet a moment, thinking of something else to do, I suppose. He got upon his knees on the pew, and looked at the people behind him. He looked especially at a demure little girl, with pretty rosy cheeks, yellow crimped hair, a nice little poke bonnet tied under her chin, and two little, nicely behaved hands lying quietly folded in her lap. The "demure little girl" looked at the boy, then at her mother, then at the boy again, with an expression that said plainly, "That little boy is not behaving himself, but I am;" and she fixed her innocent eyes determinately on the preacher. But the little boy moved more directly in front of her, and stooping down so he could just see above the back of the pew, looked at her with a laugh in his eyes. She involuntarily smiled, but instantly puckered her little lips down, put her head on one side,

moved her little hands, and glanced up at her mother, as if she had been caught conniving at the boy's bad behavior. He had evidently broken up her attitude of propriety, and she could not assume it again. The nervous, thin, good little old lady in front, who always frowned and shook her head at boys when they moved behind her—and no boy could move ever so slightly, ever so softly, could even put his hands in his pockets and take them out again, without her black eyes caught him in the nefarious act—was watching Gerard; and his mother, fearing he might be disturbing her, pulled him down to her side, put her arm around him to hold him still, and wished he would sometimes go to sleep, as the “demure little girl” behind them was preparing to do, and always did. She might as well have left him at home, you think. Well, she did not think so, and she was managing this little boy. Held still by his mother's arm, Gerard could do nothing but count the spots on the wall-paper. This promised for awhile to serve as a quietus; but he soon became so intent on his counting that he wanted to point at each one.

The old lady in front looked around; and his mother put her hand on his and held it down. Good fortune it was to Gerard when a dog made its appearance in church. He made a calling motion with his fingers, in a quiet sort of way, for, with all his restlessness, Gerard had enough sense of church propriety not to make a noise. His mother caught his fingers and shook her head, but too late; the dog had seen the call, recognized an acquaintance, and come over. Now, the trouble was to keep the dog from getting up on the pew to the boy, or the boy from getting down on the floor to the dog. The mother of Gerard was a woman of marvelous patience, and also of wonderful perseverance. Some mothers I know would have bent over the child, and with a frown and a sly shake would have whispered, "If you do n't behave yourself, I'll whip you as soon as I get you home." Then the boy would have frowned back at her, kicked the dog, and hated "the church, the steeple, the preacher, and all the good people" pretty cordially. Gerard's mother did nothing of the kind. Her broad brow was calm, and her touch soft and gen-

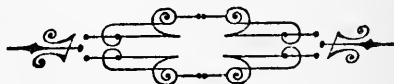
tle; but she succeeded in making the dog satisfied with lying at the boy's feet and looking up at him, and the boy with looking down at the dog and quietly rubbing the tip of his toe over the dog's back.

The music begins again. The dog is forgotten; bolt upright sits Gerard, listening with all his soul. "Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee"—how he loves that hymn! His mother sings it to him very often, and he feels he would love to be very near to the good God his mother tells him so much about, the good God who loves him. He gets closer to his mother, lays his little hand in hers, and with a solemn, earnest face listens to the hymn he never forgets.

By and by Gerard grew old enough to understand the preacher, especially when he touched on the Sunday-school lesson, or when he preached to the children, as he did sometimes—not one of those ridiculous efforts to make facetious remarks, that the children may laugh, as if they needed only to be amused, but short, direct, earnest appeals to that deeper, tenderer nature that exists even more in

the hearts of children than in older ones. After awhile he learned to find the text, to mark it, and read all about it when he went home. He always took his Bible for this purpose—it was something to do. When he grew old enough he joined the choir, for he had a very fine voice. The “demure little girl” joined the choir too; not that she had a fine voice too, though she sung very sweetly, but she looked so pretty, was so sweet and good, everybody liked to have her about. And she liked to please people, if there was nothing wrong in it; so when the choir begged her to join them, she did so. Whether *she* had any thing to do with it, or it was early training, force of habit, Gerard, not of a disposition to dissect his own heart, never stopped to think—but he always loved to go to church; and deep down in his heart, rooted in the earliest thoughts of his infancy, the love of God and unquestioning faith in His revelation had taken hold of every fiber of his nature. Other things may in after years be grafted in and grow, but the chances are the root will remain uninjured, and finally cast off the unholy grafting. For does not

the sacred record say, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it?" At the age of sixteen Gerard was converted, and joined the Church. He was a consistent member, for though full of life, and full of fun, he was by nature too earnest to be frivolous. Accustomed to being at church, to going through the service, and too sincere to play the hypocrite, he naturally made every effort to conform his heart and life to the thoughts and feelings brought forward in church and by the Sabbath service. So it was, Gerard's better thoughts and holiest feelings were associated with the Church of God; and he loved it as he loved his home.



Chapter II.

“GO WEST, YOUNG MAN.”

“THERE is really nothing here for a man to do—nothing that *I* can find,” said Gerard, as he entered his mother’s cozy sitting-room and threw himself down in an impatient, annoyed manner, in a half-reclining position, on a sofa in front of his mother. A frown clouded the usually clear and buoyant expression of his face. His mother looked up from her sewing, but said nothing. Her look was full of sympathy for his annoyance, and there was lurking back in her eyes a depth of love only a mother can feel, and pride in this her first-born—so tall, so handsome he is, in the full strength of his young manhood. Yes, the bright, blue-eyed little boy had developed into a man that any mother might be proud to call her son—not because he was tall and strong and handsome, not that his brow was broad and his blue eyes bright, but because upon his brow there was the unmistakable stamp of intellect, and his eyes were still, as in boyhood, *truth-telling*

eyes, bespeaking the frank, brave sincerity of purpose that his every act evinced; because she *knew* that her boy, though far from faultless, was *true*, was as kind and gentle as he was strong and brave. And she knew that he loved her, for he was not ashamed to show it—as, alas! too many sons are, not realizing that the mother's heart, as much as any lady-love's, longs to see and to feel the love that is hers. The older she grows, the less attractive to others, the more her heart yearns for the love of her "boys." How proud and glad an old mother looks when she clings with the weakness of age and womanly dependence to the strong arm of her son! When a boy she led him, controlled him, loved him; now she looks up to, depends on, glories in the man she has given to the world, and rejoices in his love as the staff of her old age. Be tender to the old mother, young men and older ones—be tender, be loving, affectionate. Her face is wrinkled, her hands are shriveled, but that heart within, *it* is neither old nor shriveled; it is strong, and full of love. It hungers for love as it did in the days gone by, for it is a woman's

heart. Sit down by her, take that poor old hand in yours, talk to her, make her feel she is still loved and valued. The dull old eyes will grow brighter, though it may be tears that make them so, tears that gush up with the unexpected gladness of the heart that she had been schooling to be still and expect naught.

Gerard had just returned from college, where he had graduated with honor, and already, before the summer vacation was past, was wrestling with the question, "What shall I do?" The mother knew it would be thus, and had for the last two years looked about her, with many an anxious thought, to determine what her son should do when he should have finished his college course. He had never shown a proclivity to any thing special, only a wide-awake, active readiness for something; and something would be found, right or wrong, his mother knew. She knew also that whatever this something was, it would be pursued with determination; consequently it weighed upon her mind as a matter of vital importance that this "something to do" should be wisely chosen. She

was a widow, in such comfortable circumstances, with only two children younger than Gerard, that he might have waited awhile for the way to open before him; but this she dared not persuade him to do, for the *restless* boy had become the *restless* man, and she could still say of him, "If he does not have one thing to do, he will do another." Moreover, she was fully aware what he asserted was true—there was literally nothing for him to do in their quiet village, where she had hoped, when the time came, he would find employment.

The cloud on Gerard's face partially clears away; he sits up, leans forward, and looks his mother full in the eyes, as if he would read her mind, independent of what she should say, and says, with hesitation, fearing to give her pain, "I have a notion to go West." His mother's eyes fell, her heart sunk—*this* is what she had dreaded. He saw she suffered, and his voice dropped lower as he added, "What do you say to it, mother?" There was a world of tenderness in the way he spoke that word mother.

"Well, my son, if you think it best," quietly answered the brave, wise mother.

There was an acknowledgment of his newly acquired manhood in the words, "If you think it best," that he appreciated, and made him ponder still more carefully as to whether or not he did think best.

"There is nothing for me to do here," he said again, as if reasoning the matter over with himself.

"What are your plans?" his mother asked.

"Well, Mr. McLeod is going, you know, mother, and he says if I will go with him he will insure me a comfortable start and a grand prospect for the future. I have tried not to think of it, because I felt certain you would object to my going."

"I do dread to part with you, my boy." Her voice trembled.

Tears came to Gerard's eyes.

"I won't go if you do not want me to, mother, but"—he laughed a little tremulous laugh—"if I should go, I see nothing to hinder me from coming back; there is a railroad all the way."

"That is true;" and it dawned on the mother's mind that it *need* not be an *irremediable* move. She had forgotten about

the changes made by railroads, those great binders together of humanity. She felt as if a burden had been lifted off her heart; it was not a life-and-death matter after all. She smiled, looked more cheerful; and Gerard, who was watching her face, smiled too.

Then he threw up his head, as if he thought, "It is all right now," leaned back against the sofa, put his hands in his pockets, and with a thoroughly cheerful manner and voice began: "He says, mother, he has no doubt that in ten years I can make as big a fortune as I want; and he is not a visionary man, you know, mother." She did know, and she knew him to be a trustworthy and upright as well as successful business man. "But a *thoroughly practical* Scotchman," added Gerard, with emphasis. "He has been examining into this matter now for two or three years, and is perfectly satisfied there is no room for failure. He has the capital to start any thing he wants, and makes me a very good offer."

"When does he want you to go?"

"Next week." Again Gerard looked anxiously at his mother.

She sighed, saying, "That is very soon."

Gerard, determined to preserve the cheerful aspect of the case, said, with a forced laugh: "Yes, but if a fellow is going to do a thing, he might as well go ahead and do it." Then he began a low, soft whistle, and looked around with an air of, "It is all settled; I had better be thinking about what I am to take with me." He looked at the chairs, the tables, the vases—surely he did not want to take these with him—but he watched his mother too. He was eager to make this venture, but he did not want to distress her; if he could only get her to take a cheerful view of the matter, what a relief it would be! Suddenly he broke off whistling: "I'll tell you, mother; suppose you and the girls go too, just for the trip—everybody takes trips these days—and see me settled in my new home."

"Take a trip where?" broke in a girl of fourteen years of age, coming in from the adjoining room, where she had been deeply engrossed in a Sunday-school book, but not too deeply to catch the words "girls" and "trip," spoken in a rather higher key than the rest of the conversation. She was

fleshy, and quite large for her age, with an independent, I-am-as-big-as-anybody manner. She was very fond of Sunday-school books, and when required to go to church every Sunday, which she did not like to do, would persist in reading them instead of listening to the preacher; and she would sit with the "other girls" instead of her mother.

But Annie, in her determination to be independent, did not know how much pain she caused her mother, or I cannot believe she would have pursued this course; for she had a good heart, and loved her mother devotedly.

"Take a trip where?" she repeated, coming forward, book in hand.

"West," said her brother.

"Your brother is thinking of going West on business," explained her mother, "and thinks it would be a pleasant trip for us if we would accompany him."

"You going West?" She threw up her eyebrows, stood firmly on both feet, and looked at him.

"I was thinking of it," said Gerard, looking at her, with his head on one side, in a

tone half patronizing, half defiant; "have you any thing to say against it?"

"You had better stay at home," retorted the self-reliant fourteen-year-old would-be woman; and turning off abruptly, she went to the window, sat down on one chair with her feet on the rungs of another, and went at her book again. She did not read, however. She looked out the window; she looked inquiringly at her mother, at her brother, who both sat absorbed in thought, anxious thought, she saw, and she became troubled. If there was any thing on earth she loved it was this brother; but she would not show it. She felt above the weakness of childhood, and had not reached the tenderness of womanhood.

"Well, mother," said Gerard, rising slowly, "I will see Mr. McLeod again, and we will talk it all over to-night."

He bent over and kissed her, and turned to go; then he looked at his sister as if he would like to treat her the same way, for Gerard was feeling he would leave them soon; but she looked down at her book, and he went out. Tears came to her eyes. Suddenly she looked up; so did her mother, for

a low, soft weeping was heard in the far corner of the room, behind the other sofa, where "little Mary" had her doll-house. She had been there all the time, and had heard all that had been said; so the mother understood instantly.

"Come here, darling;" and a little girl of seven crept out with her doll in hand. She was a beautiful child, with low, broad brow, and soft, wavy yellow-brown hair parted and brushed back naturally off it, and the gentlest, sweetest brown eyes. The youngest, of a lovely, affectionate disposition, she is the darling of the family. As she sinks down in her mother's arms, and is clasped to her breast, sobbing, "I do n't want brother to go!" Annie's lips tremble; she jerks herself up.

"I wish Mr. McLeod would just let brother alone!" and she flounces out of the room, goes upstairs as if she was angry at each step, slams her room door, throws herself on the bed, and sobs violently for half an hour; then exhausted, she falls asleep. When she awakes it is dusk. She lies still and thinks of all the terrible things that might, could, and would happen to any

one "going West." Her brother gets into trouble. Her mother is miserable. She comes forward as the main stay of the family; goes West, rescues her brother from danger—the nature of the danger and the method of rescuing it was unnecessary to decide—she brings him home safe, and makes her mother and little Mary happy. When the tea-bell rings, the brave child goes down subdued in manner, but with the air of a resolute heroine. Ah, yes! we may laugh at her, but she has growing up in her young heart immense capabilities for doing the brave deeds she is ever planning, but proudly keeping her thoughts to herself. She is but the elements of a good, brave, long-suffering, all-enduring, noble woman, in their crude, chaotic state; and it is to be hoped no injudicious, undiscerning hand will hinder their perfect crystallization into those natural and beautiful forms designed by the Creator. Her mother understands her, for, strange as it may seem, she passed through the same stage. She told her one day she reminded her of herself at her age.

"Like you, mother!" exclaimed the child,

surprised and delighted; for though she often fancied herself the grandest of heroines, Annie sometimes considered herself almost equal to the heavy villain of the play, capable of the most tragic crimes. After that she became more hopeful in regard to herself; there was a bond of sympathy between her and her mother, and an ideal formed upon that mother took possession of her breast. An ideal in the mind will work to the surface some day. If that ideal be as perfect as the man Christ Jesus, the development will be through suffering unto holiness.

As Annie entered the supper-room she found little Mary in a full laugh. She had been consoled by the joint efforts of mother and brother, by their caresses, and by amusing accounts of what was to be seen "out West." And Mr. McLeod's appearance on the scene did away with the sentimental view of the case, and put upon it such a matter-of-fact face that it seemed but a business trip to a place only a few hours off. It *seemed* so; yes, and the good mother *seemed* cheerful, and fell quite naturally into the arrangements; but O how

her heart ached! She knew she was giving up her boy—boy no longer; her home would be his no more, for well she knew going meant staying. Her mind submitted to the reasoning that it was best; and her heart her unselfish woman's heart, hid itself away out of sight, but it moaned and sighed unheard.

Annie had some difficulty in adapting herself to the new phase of affairs. It was hard to give up her indignation at Mr. McLeod, and her heroic resolves. But she was a girl of good sense, and good heart; her brother was so merry, and Mr. McLeod, looking as fresh and bright as sunrise on a clear day, beamed so kindly on her—she was a favorite of his—that altogether she soon fell into the popular view of the matter. She understood that Mr. McLeod, instead of alluring her brother away from home, to be devoured by unknown, nameless dangers, waiting with wide-open mouths to swallow him up in case his heroic sister did not interfere, was acting the part of a friend to the young man whose worth he so well knew; that her brother was merely going to another town, pretty

much like the one they lived in, only more wide-awake, to go into business, and perhaps grow rich. She rushed to the other extreme, and for the time forgot the pain of the separation—what home would be without this light-hearted, loving brother.

Before the time came for him to go, the mother and son had many an evening talk, she giving wise and sympathetic counsel, he unconsciously stowing away last fond memories as future guards against temptation to evil. I say unconsciously, because Gerard was not given to much self-inspection; he was intensely objective in his nature, quick to see, impulsive in action. His impulses were good by inheritance and early training. God to him was not an effort of reason, but a living, ever-present Person, an overruling Being, who governed him and all things around him in wisdom and love; and he honestly loved God, and desired to please him, even as he desired to please his mother. His love for her was the ruling passion of his life. The ruling power of his mind was a determination to achieve; he could no more be passive than water can stand still on an inclined plane;

for good or evil, he must be *active*. As yet there had been no cause, under the wise guidance of his mother, to divert this activity into evil courses. But how far this impulsive nature would resist the unobserved, insinuating approaches of evil—the adroit mixture of good and evil that the world presents to the unwary, to lead the indiscriminating into tangled meshes of a web hard to break through when the soul, alarmed at some apparent evil, turns to look upon her garments, and finds them not “unspotted from the world”—was a question that weighed upon the anxious mother’s heart. She knew he would not always find the lines between right and wrong so strongly marked as he now felt them to be. She laid his hymn-book and his Bible, with many a passage marked, in his trunk; and on her knees, with bowed head and tearful eyes, she intrusted him to the love of his Heavenly Father, to the care of the blessed Saviour, who loved him far better than she. “Into thine hand I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.”

Chapter III.

SUNDAY IN A BORDER TOWN.

“Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men.” Psalm xxvi. 9.

DEAR MOTHER: I intended to have written to you more fully before this, but Mr. McLeod has kept every moment of my time engaged, except the few moments I snatched before retiring, dreadfully tired, to write you those few lines. As I told you, I like the place in many respects. Though now a small town, it has undoubted prospects of being, some day in the near future, a thriving city. There are some very pleasant people here, but quite an element of roughs. By that I do not mean abandoned, wicked men; on the contrary, many of them are as good-hearted, clever men as you will find anywhere, but men, such as one always meets in new settlements, who, feeling they have left well-dressed civilization behind them, by general consent have become careless, reckless in dress, in manner, language, and habits of life. If there were more ladies here, it might be different. But

the article most needed here, I think, is a church. Do you know, mother, there is not one in the place—not one of any denomination, not even a school-house or any place to hold service in. A Methodist preacher has been here occasionally and preached in the streets, they say, but otherwise than that there has been here no preaching even. I did not know what to do with myself this morning. When I asked where service would be held and was told “nowhere,” a laugh was raised at my “righteous horror,” as they called it; though several of the men afterward confessed to me they often felt the lack of it themselves, and did not like to write for their wives and children until there was a church built, and the place had a more home-like look. “Women-folks could n’t get along without a church,” they said; and it did make a town “seem sorter wild and uncivilized like not to have a ‘meetin’-house.’” “Why, a smaller town they knew of had already two churches, and they had heard of people going there instead of coming here on that account.” I asked if no effort had ever been made to have a church

built. "Well, yes; they had heard that Mrs. Johnson had been trying, but nothing had been done yet." They then gave me quite a touching little history of this Mrs. Johnson. One of them had known her before she came out here. She was as good a woman as ever lived; was a member of the M. E. Church, South. He was a Presbyterian himself, but was willing to help Mrs. Johnson, or anybody, to get any sort of a church built. Her husband also was a consistent member of the Church when they came here, but had fallen into bad habits. She had made every effort to win him back from them, but in vain. He, formerly so kind and considerate of his wife, had become cross and neglectful of her. She was a lady of great refinement, and found but little congenial society in the place. She visited the suffering and the sick, and the roughest man in the community treated her with respect. It was on her invitation, as her guest, that the minister had come who had preached in the street.

"There he is now, there is Bill Johnson;" he lowered his voice and gave me a

nudge with his elbow. I looked around and saw sauntering in a surly, red-eyed man. He might have been handsome in other days, and genial, as they say he was, before he took to such hard drink; but it is difficult to believe now. He went straight to the bar for a drink. Yes, this conversation took place in the *bar-room*. Don't be horrified, mother; for it is the parlor too, the only place in the house for the boarders to meet, and you have to go through it to get to the rest of the house. It looked strange, as I walked out at church-time, to see no appearance of Sabbath anywhere, save that the respectable business houses were closed; and there were more loungers to be seen in front of the hotel and the *saloons*—there are two or three of those here, and they appear quite popular, especially with the miners, who come into town on Sunday oftener than on other days. "Sunday clothes" were nowhere apparent, and I soon saw mine were attracting attention; for, as I have intimated, delicacy of remark is not to be expected—though it was evidently good-humored fun, and not ill-nature or intentional rudeness, that prompted

their speech. I took a general survey of the town for the first time. As I went by a neat little cottage, one of the few places with flowers in the yard, I was attracted by a low, sweet singing. I glanced up at the window, and saw a pale, delicate lady who looked weary and lonely. Feeling homesick and lonely myself, I was half inclined to open an acquaintance with her. Walking on a little out of sight, I stood still and listened. She sung some of our favorite hymns. While I stood there, a man, passing by, stopped and said pleasantly, "You seem a stranger in these parts." I told him I was, and that I had been disappointed in not finding a church in the place. He smiled and asked, "Do you know that lady singing?" I told him I did not—that I had been attracted by her singing and stopped to listen. "You ought to know her; you are the kind she looks after," he said, laughing. He was an intelligent man, with more cultivation than the majority I have met, and I liked his looks very much, but I could not imagine what he was laughing at. I told him I had just been thinking I should like to make her acquaintance.

"Well, come along then." I followed him. When we got in front of the window he called, "Mrs. Johnson." She looked out. "Here is a young fellow you had better take charge of; he is looking for a church."

"I would be glad to have him come in;" and in an instant she stood at the open door. "Won't you come in, my young friend?"

Her invitation was cordial, and I knew as soon as I heard her name she was the lady I had just heard of, so I felt no hesitation in going in, though I knew my face was flaming red, for I felt exceedingly embarrassed by this queer method of introduction from a stranger, who went on, highly amused at what he had done. Mrs. Johnson told me afterward that he was a very intelligent, pleasant man, but not at all religious; and that it was a mere freak on his part, his introducing me in that way. It may have been a freak on his part, but it was providence on God's part, for it has given me a friend I know I shall value. Then the man himself—though he showed it in a funny sort of way—I think, felt a degree of sympathy for the "lone, lorn"

stranger of such youthful appearance. Mrs. Johnson made me feel at home with her. I told her all about myself, all about you, and every thing else, I believe. She gave a great many kind warnings against the evil courses she thought I might be tempted to fall into. Especially she warned me against the temptations of drinking-saloons and bar-rooms. Her warning in *that* respect was entirely unnecessary as far as I am concerned, for no one could have a greater disgust for such things than I have. I knew it was her husband's fate she was thinking of. But another thing she said in this connection that I fear applies to me; that is, that the natural desire in men to go where they see others gathered often leads them to join the crowd, even though the place and the general sentiment of the company may at first be distasteful to them. I felt that way this morning. I wanted company, and was tempted to stop with the merry crowd I saw around a saloon; but it did not seem the right way to spend the Sabbath, even if I did not join in the drinking. In the bar-room and around the saloons were the only places where I saw

crowds collected. I asked her if there were many Christians here. She said she did not know; that in a new place like this strangers were continually coming in, and one had no means of learning who they were—her health had been too feeble to go about much. There might be many here who would encourage and be a comfort to each other if they were only brought together; but how could this be done without a church to serve as a public place of meeting? If a church were built in their midst, she believed, like a magnet, it would draw out Christians all through the community, bring together those who now know nothing of each other, and by numbers strengthen and encourage individuals. On Sunday, at least, it would give men somewhere besides drinking-saloons to come together, “where they might receive the ‘living water’ that giveth eternal life, rather than the liquor that is poison to mind, body, and soul.” She spoke these last words with intense feeling, and tears came into her eyes. Then she added, in a lower tone, as if on the eve of telling me the trouble I knew of: “I know of men,

faithful members of the Church, led astray in this way, who might have resisted temptation had they been surrounded by the influence of Christian communion." Perhaps, mother, it was this need in human nature that made St. Paul warn Christians not to forsake "the assembling of yourselves together." She sat in silence a few moments, looking out of the window with the weariest, saddest face I ever saw, then with a sigh said: "Yes, if we could only have a church, of *any* denomination, it would draw Christians together in a body and serve as a counter influence to evil associations; but I cannot now see how this object can be attained. I have waited and hoped in vain—no, it will not be in vain; God will yet hear my prayers before it is too late." Becoming conscious that her conversation, or manner rather, might be calculated to sadden when she had intended to cheer, she apologized and tried to be more cheerful. But I would rather she had talked of her troubles, if it was any relief to her. With no relatives here but a drunken, unkind husband, how sad her heart must be! But they say she spends

her time trying to comfort others. When I left she pressed me to come to see her often; to come if I felt homesick or troubled.

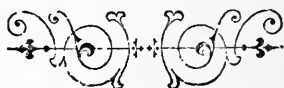
I came back to my boarding-house to twelve o'clock dinner; have been reading and writing ever since, and—I am ashamed to say it—wishing Sunday over, that I may go to work and not have time to think so much about home; for I believe I am thoroughly homesick. [He did not tell her he could scarcely refrain from a regular cry; he was afraid it would sound babyish, though *she* would not have regarded it so. What mother would?] Your letter was a great treat. I know you will write as often as you can. Tell sister to write; and little Mary might make out to send me a few lines. A single word from any one at home would be a welcome sight, and highly prized. I wish I could catch one little glimpse of you this evening, but you know the old saying about not looking back when you have put your hand to the plow. I must go on to the end of my furrow. God grant it may be straight and in the right direction!

Mr. McLeod slept late this morning; he was very tired, and has been reading ever since—after taking a walk; he is not much of a talker, you remember, and is fond of reading. I wish I was.

Love to the girls.

Your devoted son,

GERARD.



Chapter IV.

HOW SUNDAY BECAME LESS TIRESOME.

MANY Sundays after this did Gerard spend in an unsatisfactory manner—longing to go “to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day;” missing sadly the Christian communion to which he had from infancy been accustomed. One or two Sabbath mornings he spent profitably with Mrs. Johnson, and became attached to her; but she was taken sick, and was confined to her bed the greater portion of the winter. She lent him books; but it was living companionship Gerard wanted. Closely confined during the week (he was book-keeper), he wanted to be out and about, moving, seeing people, talking or listening. A seat in the bar-room at his boarding-house was not pleasant, nor people he met there congenial.

Mr. McLeod, a quiet, middle-aged man, whose part of the business kept him on his feet, moving constantly, was glad enough to be still and rest when Sunday came. He

was fond of reading, and did not mind being alone, though he always made Gerard welcome to his room with the most hospitable endeavors to keep up a conversation. A few general remarks exhausted his powers in that line, and were supplemented by a kind smile that said a great many things. It said: "I am pleased with you; if it entertains you to talk, I will kindly listen, though on the whole a little bored; yet go on, it does not matter." He not only liked Gerard, but admired him heartily; and were he tested would prove a true friend, steadfast under all circumstances. He saw with pleasure that Gerard was not carried away with the follies of young men, and was satisfied, for he was not himself a member of the Church. He was kind, considerate, and courteous, but not at all genial. What he had to say was to the point, decided and short in word, not in manner—that was usually quite pleasant, though he could be very stern with a wrong-doer.

Gerard had made the acquaintance of some young men of his own age, and they were bright, pleasant companions; but they did not have his ideas of the sacredness of

the Sabbath. For instance, they could see no harm in a game of base-ball for exercise, if it was Sunday, "when a fellow had been cooped up all the week." To be sure they would go to church, if there was a church to go to; but as there was none, they saw no use of moping about all day, just because it was Sunday. Gerard could not hold himself aloof and walk around by himself all day. He would occasionally watch the game, and sometimes, involuntarily darting after the ball, be drawn into the game more than he intended. Again, he would join a crowd of excited miners collected in the bar-room of his boarding-house, and listen with interest to their talk of mines and great prospective wealth; their tramps through the mountains seeking for mines; of their hunts, etc. He made friends among them, and felt tempted to go himself in search of gold, but concluded he was "doing well enough, and had better let well enough alone." As spring came on, he began taking walks with them into the mountains. These were delightful; the views were so beautiful. Gerard at first confined his strolls to the afternoon, when

the miners were returning; the morning, as best he could, he gave to the worship of God. But these walks became popular; several young men of the town joined them; and finally they developed into all-day excursions. A regular miner's costume was provided. They started by day-break, and taking a day's provisions, did not return until bed-time. Gerard enjoyed these rambles to the utmost, and ere many weeks it became his custom to rise before light on Sunday, with only a hurried prayer and scarcely a thought that it was the Sabbath-day, to don the rough costume prepared for the excursion, shoulder his gun, and start out, not to return until night; when tired he lost no time in going to sleep. The next morning early the weekly routine of work began. He wrote less often to his mother, and all his letters began with an apology. However, he gave her such graphic accounts of his trips, of the beautiful scenery, and seemed so buoyant, she readily forgave his not writing often. But the mother's heart took alarm. She remonstrated mildly. He responded: "There is no harm in *walking* on Sunday; I rarely have occasion to shoot."

I would not fail to go to church, mother, if there was a church to go to; there is none, and what is a fellow to do? He cannot sit around all day."

No, there is no harm in a walk on Sunday; and one cannot attend church where there is none; but, poor mother! her heart grew more and more restless and uneasy. A little walk was different from a regular excursion like this—the whole Sabbath so spent. What could she advise him to do? He had made no religious acquaintances, yet seemed to have gone by the many temptations of evil associations unscathed. He had even endeavored, at her suggestion, to get young men to join him in prayer-meetings in his room; they had come occasionally; he had prayed with them, and they had listened, joined in, and sometimes been impressed by his well-sung hymns. But they soon stopped. He could not stem the tide alone. He could not remain aloof from all companionship. How she wished there was a church to bring the Christians together! for she was confident her boy would not neglect divine service if it were held. Yes, if there had been a church in

the place, Gerard would not only have been faithful in attendance, but his good influence—for all who knew him had respect for his manliness, sincerity, and uprightness—and his beautiful, heart-felt singing would have drawn others, especially his young companions, to the house of God.

His singing was enjoyed very much by all who heard him. At times Mr. McLeod would put down his book and come into his room to listen. On Sunday he would sing nothing but hymns. On their Sunday excursions when he sung them, as he did when called upon; and once in awhile when reaching a high peak, a wide-stretching, beautiful view of valleys and mountains farther away burst suddenly upon their sight, he involuntarily sung an exultant hymn to the glory of God—it was listened to with pleasure, and in some way had a soothing effect on the consciences of the men. Very often, however, the wag of the party, with more wit than reverence, would follow with a travesty so comical that it was almost impossible to resist the laugh, especially as he had the tact to avoid blasphemy. After awhile Gerard grew accustomed to

this; it did not shock him as much as it did at first, and he made no effort to restrain his laughter. Finally he fell to "singing those songs which do not tend to the knowledge or the love of God," because the ring of the music took possession of his ear, and he was impulsive. Ah, how artful old Satan is! He saw Gerard was too high game to be caught by grog-shops, by any sins low and vulgar. He was too temperate, too upright and pure, not to revolt at them; but now, see how he is tolling him on. Once he went too fast, and gave Gerard a shock; then he hid his head and went more cautiously.

It was one evening when resting in the hut of an old miner, before returning to town, they called upon Gerard for a song, and he sung a beautiful, impressive hymn that seemed to subdue and awaken the better feelings of the party. It was too solemn for the wag, whose special mission seemed to be to prevent any thing of the kind, and he arose with the utmost gravity and passed the hat around to take up the collection. Though the joke was very, very hackneyed indeed, it served the purpose of raising

a laugh, and dispersing earnest thought. Now two others, with no wit and less reverence for the God who made them, thinking to increase the laugh, passed a word with each other, then taking the bread and a glass of whisky from the table, started around as if to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This was too much—the laugh vanished from Gerard's face; but before he could speak, the rough old miner said in a coaxing tone: "Don't do that, boys; don't do that. It looks sorter like flinging an insult in the face of the Almighty, this thing of making fun of church doings." The party felt the reproof far more than if Gerard had spoken. Gerard looked up in surprise, and caught the old man's eye; they looked into each other's hearts, and from that moment became friends. The old miner thought, "That young fellow needs somebody to help him to keep in the right way, but I ain't the man to do it." He got up in a careless, slouching manner, saying, "It's my opinion anybody that's goin' back to town to-night had better be a-rustling." This truth struck the party; they sprung up and started.

Now, you see, the arch enemy adroitly used this speech from the old man, who made no professions of religion, to soothe Gerard's conscience, and put a better face on things. But you must not forget God is at work as well as the evil one, for the old man's effort to defend the honor of his God, and his humble desire to help a fellow-creature in the path of righteousness, drew his own heart one step nearer the Saviour, and raised up for the younger man a friend who "cared for his soul." As the old man was not a Christian, Satan was off his guard with him; thought he could use him, and that would be the end of it. Not being all-wise, he often overreaches himself in this way. Poor Gerard! the devil is making a grand strike and a wily one for his noble heart and much-guarded soul.

In the first place, the boy, in his desire to be doing and his hope of achieving a fortune, had thought of his future place of residence only from a business stand-point, thinking that all that was necessary; and lo, Satan led him to a prosperous town where, as in his thought in the move, God had no dwelling-place—no house where his children

could come to seek their Heavenly Father, and meeting as brothers and sisters in the *home* of their Father, love, encourage, and help each other; no house to which Christians could point, saying to sinners: "Come, go with us up to the house of the Lord our God, and you shall find comfort to your souls." He led him to a prosperous town wherein he, Satan, had many houses; where *his* children were busy, saying to poor homeless Christians, "Come to the house of our father"—they take care not to call him by name—"Come to the house of our father; it is bright and pleasant, and we are ready to receive you as friends. Come, 'eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow ye die.'" The enemy of souls was glad when he got ahead of Gerard in the matter of a church, for he knew he stood no chance if he let him go where there was one; the boy was so well trained he would be sure to go in the beaten path that would as certainly lead him to the house of God as if his mother's gentle hand still held his. But Satan was disappointed when he found his dens of sin had no power to allure the homesick Christian, even when his friend Mrs. John-

son was stricken down; that long-suffering Christian, by the power of prayer, will triumph over him yet. And so he led Gerard up into the mountain to be tempted through the more refined portion of his nature—the love of the beautiful. His unseen enemy is rejoicing now. Why? Because Gerard, though yet unconscious of it, has turned his back on God. He has not gone far, it is true; but his face does not look toward God, and his feet are turned away. He has ceased to keep the Sabbath *holy unto the Lord*. He has forgotten, “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.” (Isa. lviii. 13, 14.) Seeking his *own pleasure* on the Sabbath-day, he had ceased to *delight* himself in the Lord.

Bear with me, reader, while I call your attention to this passage from God’s Word. Are you one of those who quote the fourth commandment as commanding only a cessa-

tion from labor, forgetting the command is, "Remember the Sabbath-day, *to keep it holy*," for it "is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God?" Then read again this warning he gives you; cease from doing your *own pleasure*, from "*speaking thine own words*," on God's holy Sabbath-day, that you may *delight* yourself in the Lord; for what Christian can stand who does not?

Gerard had ceased to *delight* himself in the Lord, pursuing this not uncommon course—that is all; but his enemy rejoiced. There is no stand-still in Christian life. Gerard having turned his face away from beholding the glory of his God, from finding his delight in the law of the Lord, will drift farther away through the "counsel of the ungodly," will stand in "the way of sinners, and perhaps finally sit in the seat of the scornful;" or he will open his eyes, see the way he is going, turn back with a penitent heart, and henceforth be a more humble, watchful Christian.

Yes, the arch enemy of souls is rejoicing over this upright, temperate, thoroughly moral young man, because he has ceased to

keep holy the Sabbath-day. But Gerard is not given over to his enemy—there are good influences at work to save him. His mother in tearful prayer pours out her anxiety into the loving heart of her Saviour. Mrs. Johnson on her sick-bed, suffering in mind and body, throws herself in faith upon the love and mercy of her God—and Satan is at a sore disadvantage when an invalid, deprived of every resource, of every weapon save a humble trust in her God, brings *that* to bear as an irresistible force against the powers of evil. Remember this, suffering, helpless ones, and give your prayers to the Church of God for the salvation of souls.

Mrs. Johnson's determination to build a house to the Lord her God was only strengthened by her illness. She and Gerard's mother opened a correspondence, and remembering the words of David, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob," they determined to leave no stone unturned in their efforts to erect a church on the scene of their loved one's temptation.

The need of this church had come home to their hearts.

Reader, have you loved ones or friends seeking a livelihood in that far Western country?



Chapter V.

A MOUNTAIN TRAGEDY.

"Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation." Psalm li. 14.

BY summer-time Gerard was so completely fascinated by this active, outdoor, mountain life that when Mr. McLeod informed him that he had determined to close up his business, and spend the summer in New York making arrangements to open in the fall business of a different kind and on a larger scale, he decided at once to spend the summer in the mountains—whither, as soon as he was released, he hastened to go, regardless of the character of the companions who went with him. Some of them were strangers whose acquaintance he had formed in the bar-room of his boarding-house. The old miner had given him a hint that they might not be what they seemed; but as the old man was quiet, and they were very animated, attractive talkers, who grew excited as they told wonderful tales of adventures in the mount-

ains, his unobtrusive warning went unnoticed. His mother's anxiety grew tenfold greater. She tried to quiet her fears with the assurance that there was no harm in a tour in the mountains—certainly not; it is in the condition of the heart the danger lies; therefore are we warned, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The good mother could not shut her eyes to the fact that in his heart her son had forsaken his first love, and had ceased to "watch." A dread of evil took possession of her heart, and would not let her rest, but kept her praying without ceasing to God to save him from sin.

The little girls, observing their mother's anxiety, partook of it. Seeing her efforts to establish a church in the town where their brother lived, they too threw their hearts into the project. Annie wondered of all the evils she had imagined would befall her beloved brother, of this she had never thought. Wild beasts might destroy him, or robber bands take him captive; but she never once thought of that robber of souls who goeth about like a roaring lion

seeking whom he may devour. Now, indeed, she would help to rescue him from danger. She felt mortified when she thought of her self-applauding heroism in imaginary, unlikely dangers; and praying God to rescue her own soul, she, understanding the powerful agency of this much-desired church, went to work among the girls of her own age, and of little Mary's, aroused an interest in the work, and formed a society to raise money for it. Awakened to a knowledge of the great privilege they enjoyed in having a church in which to worship God, and Christian friends to take an interest in them, she and her girl friends became more faithful in their attendance at church, listened more earnestly to the minister, and felt thankful for Christian admonitions. A revival sprung up among them; Annie and many others were converted; unselfish efforts for the salvation of others had been the means of saving their own souls, of bringing God's blessings upon themselves.

To a subscription-list, taken around by a young girl sent out by Mrs. Johnson just before he started, Gerard had signed his name for a large amount, but I fear with

less personal interest than he would have felt those first Sundays, when his soul panted after God as the hart panteth after the water brooks. That was the first of June; now it is the last of August, and Gerard's mother has not heard from him for many weeks. Let us look in the mountains for him.

There is a house high up on the mountains. It stands alone; for many miles it is the only house where man may find rest under the shelter of a roof. It may, by courtesy, be termed a tavern. It is a large one-story log-house; logs formed the roof, with a covering of earth thrown upon them, and the chimney was made by cutting into the side of the mountain, against which it is built. There are two rooms; one is the family-room, used for cooking, sleeping, and every thing else. The other room is the public apartment. On one side of it there is laid a floor of planks that covers about half the room, and is used as a general bed on which the guests may lie, each man wrapped in his own blanket. The rest of the room has the bare earth for a floor. In the corner of the room to the left of

the fire-place, indicated by a rude counter across the corner, with a few shelves back of it, is the bar, from which the most villainous liquors are sold. And the seller is the roughest, the most pitiable specimen of youth that ever went with unkempt hair and ragged trousers suspended by one "gallows" over a dirty colored shirt. Yes, here too, high up in the mountain, in the most comfortable corner of even this rude dwelling, sits the triumphant demon of intemperance. Strong indeed must be the wings of the good angel, fleet and far must he fly, if he would outstrip this most active of demons, for whom no mountain is too high, no desert too wide, and no settlement of men too small, too rude or rough, to require his attention. Why should he be always first? Because—alas that it should be true!—he is often carried with his twin brother, love of gain, in the breast of the first man who goes. "Mine host" brought them here—that is his son behind the bar—and built this house expressly for them; putting it, with care, where none would compete with them in alluring the passers-by, for this is the highest point

on the road over the mountain. Quite a number of men have gathered into this place to escape a hard rain. There is laughing, loud talking, hilarious greetings, a multitude of oaths, a moving to and from the bar, and the air is filled with the odor of drying blankets, held to the fire by newcomers. The wind, ever and anon, drives gusts of smoke, and sometimes rain, down the wide-open chimney; occasionally loosened earth from the mountain-side rolls down. The fire is dull and the room is cheerless; but it is a relief to find shelter from the rain, and a place to sleep under a roof, as imperfect even as this one, now leaking in several places, making little pools of water over there, and mud on the earth in front of the fire-place. Some of the guests are seated on the three-legged stools of the crudest make, that serve as the only furniture. One in the corner by the fire is dozing off the effects of liquor. Others, on a blanket spread upon the wet floor, are seated in a group playing cards with a very dirty pack. They are gambling, and are often in a high state of excitement, increased by liquor brought them from the

bar. In *this* group is the man we seek. That fair-haired, blue-eyed man, who looks so boyish among those bronzed, hardened faces around him—that is Gerard. O how changed he is! The clear, bright light has gone from his eyes, and in its place an uncertain, eager excitement is flashing from under an angry frown. He has lost; he is eager to gain. How did he reach this state? In disagreeable weather and at night cards were played, sometimes for money, sometimes “only for amusement,” according to the company; for Gerard had drifted about, with one party then another, as these, his most interesting companions, often left him for days without adieus, or invitations to join them; though they seemed never to lose sight of him, and always rejoined him at unexpected moments. When apparently flush with money, they bet high. Gerard would not play at first; yet there was nothing to do but to watch the game. He became interested, of course; he could not help that. The first time he played, one hand was lacking to complete the game, and it was “only for amusement;” so his companions for that day

urged, "they would not gamble any more than he would." And perhaps they never did; but look at Gerard. He played that day. After that he always played "for amusement," forgetting the kind warning of his Church, not to do "what we know is not for the glory of God"—"taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus." "Only for amusement," he took pitch into his hands with the full determination that he would not be defiled. Only to take off the raw chill of dampness he grew accustomed to taking that "fire-water" into his system—though he did not like it, and though it darted like fiery serpents through his fresh young blood and excitable brain. His present and most constant associates would not play without gambling; and at first he always won. Now he is losing, for he plays fair. He is losing; his blood is at fever heat; angry passion is stirring in his breast, for he begins to suspect the other players are not dealing fairly by him. His quick eye, on the alert, catches a sly movement on the part of the man who is winning from him.

"You are cheating!" shouted Gerard, loudly and angrily.

The man accused springs to his feet with an oath, giving Gerard the lie; with loud-mouthed threats whipping out his ready pistol.

Gerard, agile as a cat, quickly up, without a word, like a flash, seized a heavy stool just vacated near him, and hurled it at the head of his assailant, who falls just in time for the ball from his pistol to graze the top of Gerard's head and enter high up in the wall beyond.

Now there is a hubbub, a bustle, a shuffling of feet, loud exclamations.

For a moment Gerard felt a sense of relief that he had not been killed in a gambling brawl.

"He is dead!" said one of the crowd gathered around the fallen man.

Like lightning, with the words, the thought flashed through Gerard's brain, "I am a murderer!" and panic-stricken, more afraid of his dead than his living assailant, he fled from the house; sprung upon his horse, that he had learned from his companions to have always ready—it stood under a

large tree near the house. Being an unusually fleet as well as a sure-footed cayuse, it had borne him almost out of sight down the winding road before his absence was noticed in the confusion.

"Arrest him!" cried the man dozing near the fire, aroused from his drowsy state by the pistol-shot which he, yet hardly able to take in the circumstances, thinks Gerard fired; and reveals himself a government official to assert the authority of the law, glad of an opportunity to show himself active in his duties.

"He is gone!" responded several; and there was a rush to the door.

The other two men who were playing with Gerard, with one glance at the "agent," rushed out—doubtless with great zeal for the majesty of the law—sprung upon their horses and dashed after the fugitive.

A fugitive from justice! O Gerard, our bright little boy, our noble youth, would that other influences could have been thrown around you!

When the crowd rushed to the door, an old man in miner's dress, with a kind but

rugged face, who had come in unnoticed a moment before the row, came forward, knelt down by the victim of Gerard's anger, and looked intently into his face. Does he recognize him? Is this man any thing to him, that the old miner looks so eagerly and anxiously on his still face, closed eyes, and motionless form? The kind old face grows very sad. Now he rises up in eager haste. Will he too pursue the fugitive?



Chapter VI.

A WANDERER FROM GOD AND MAN.

“And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth.” Gen. iv. 13, 14.

POOR Gerard, as now he flies swiftly along the road, now picks his way in dangerous places, thinks of his mother, of all his friends at home. Can he never 'go among them again? would not they refuse to receive the murderer? He shuddered as he thought the word. Would he be allowed even to walk among men as a free man? Now he remembers he may have to suffer the penalty of the law; perhaps he is pursued. He pauses. He hears the swift approach of unseen horses beyond the bend of the road. He turns quickly from the road—fortunately this was a point where he could easily do so, and the trees were thick enough, as he pressed his way among them, to screen him from the horsemen when they dashed by. Now he realizes he

is a fugitive from the face of man, and a sense of despair comes over him—prison, death, disgrace, face him; his mother is brought in sorrow to her grave by the son who should have been the main stay of her old age. Was this the end of all the bright hopes with which he left his home and his reluctant mother? He had hoped to return in pride and wealth; instead, she would hear of him as a fugitive from justice, or a prisoner at the bar tried for taking the life of his fellow-man. He gave his cayuse the rein and left the sure-footed beast to pick its own way. Night came on; still Gerard wandered aimlessly and slowly along. So absorbed was his mind with grief, anxiety, and useless plans and imaginings that, hid by the darkness, he knew not, cared not where he went. He did not know that his horse through the pathless woods had turned its head back in the direction he had come. Now it turns to the left; he does not know it. On it goes, carefully and surely, as if it knew the way. It is descending a steep place—a plunge; but for his quickness of motion, the unguarded rider would have gone over .

its head; and the horse stands still, as if it had reached its destination. "Where am I?" thought Gerard. The moon peeped through the clouds at him. It saw a tired, haggard, desolate young man sitting upon his horse, in a strange place in those wild western mountains, far away from home, from loved ones—from whom crime, like an insurmountable barrier, seems to have separated him forever. He looks around in a dazed, despairing way; sees that he is on a level, open place in front of a large rock, that a little above the height of his horse's head projects suddenly and sharply far out from the side of the mountain. Glad of the shelter it offers, he dismounts, unfastens his saddle, throws it under, and goes himself where the rain has not reached and it is dry. There he sat far back under that rock out of the rain, thinking, thinking—trying to *think* himself out of the terrible strait he finds himself in. He tried to pray, but the thought of how he stood in the sight of *man* prevented; if God did forgive him, would that save him from the penalty of the law, from dishonor? If he could but escape without dis-

grace or punishment from this unfortunate affair, he would certainly be more careful in the future. It was the dread of man, the sacrifice of his hopes in regard to this world, that was torturing his mind. It began to rain again, and the horse came under the rock for shelter. Gerard thought he was fortunate in finding this great rock to protect himself and horse. Then the hymn came into his mind,

Rock of ages, cleft for me;
Let me hide myself in thee

His impulse was to sing it, but it choked in his throat with a great sob. He felt the difference between himself now and when he sung that song at home. He threw himself upon his face in the dust, and moaned and wept aloud. He felt a great sorrow for himself.

"My punishment is greater than I can bear!" he cried out in his agony. As he uttered the words, he remembered they were those of the first murderer; and with Cain he stood before an offended God and heard the words of his condemnation: "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive

thy brother's blood from thy hand. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." "O my mother, my poor mother!" sobbed Gerard; and weeping like a child, he fell into a troubled slumber, broken by starts and dreams of home. After awhile youth and fatigue claimed their own, and he sunk into a deep, sound sleep.

He was not aware he had been asleep when he awoke to hear the birds singing merrily—to see the sun shining, glittering upon the rain-drops on the trees and on the grass; off of the last his good horse was peacefully trying to make a breakfast. He sprung up; health, natural buoyancy of temperament, the melody of the birds, and the beautiful outstretching scene, fresh and brilliant in the morning sunlight, made him forget for a moment the cloud upon his life. His face all alight with pleasure, he would have joined the birds in the singing of glad praises to God; but in an instant he remembered the day and night just past. A cloud arose out of his own heart, spread its dull folds over the bright scene—lo, it is bright no longer, and the singing of the birds is unheard. What evil

magician has waved his wand over the beautiful earth, made so beautiful by a holy and loving God? The magician is the evil one; the powerful wand he waves to darken the heart of man, and cloud the beautiful earth, is sin; and the overspreading cloud is sorrow, that will weep bitter tears upon us. If these tears be those of *true* repentance, the light of the Sun of righteousness will bring from them the glittering colors of the rainbow hope, to add to the fresh, new beauty of the earth; for out of the cleansed heart will go not the cloud that darkens but the joy that gladdens the earth—the grateful praise that ascends with the melody of the bird’s glad song. But Gerard—though he had wept, though he had bemoaned his fate, though he pitied the beloved mother who would suffer by his fault, though he felt the condemnation of a just and an offended God—had not yet shed the tears of true repentance that never fail to bring relief from the merciful heart of the Saviour who came to save, and will cast out none who come to him in truth. When he remembers the day and night of agony just past, the buoy-

ant light that lit up his face on waking leaves it, his arms droop, but his thought is, "What shall I *do*? Where shall I *go*?" Was Gerard's heart already hardened in sin? No, O no; it was only stunned by the suddenness and greatness of his calamity. His position in regard to the world is a dreadful, urgent problem his mind was trying to solve. Where should he go? He knew enough about the surrounding country to be able to avoid the habitations of man; but he could not go aimlessly wandering around—he must resolve upon some plan. He sat down upon a rock to think. His hat is slouched over his face; his clothes are dirty and dusty—so is his face, and so are the hands clasped over it. He tries to think, but in dull misery he watches his horse nibbling at the short, sparse grass, and envies him, for he is very hungry—he has not eaten since noon yesterday. His horse turns and goes toward a small stream of water trickling from the mountain-side. Gerard follows him, for he is thirsty too. He drinks, washes his face and hands, wipes them on a soiled handkerchief, involuntarily brush-

es some of the dust off his clothes, and feels refreshed. The horse finds more grass here, and crops it as peacefully and quietly as if there were no such thing as sin or sorrow in the world. Gerard is glad his horse has found food, for he not only loves the horse, but he remembers that he may have to depend on the strength of his horse for safety—he forgot: “A horse is a vain thing for safety. Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death.” But Gerard himself is very hungry; he wishes he could eat grass too. The thought recalled the story of the prodigal son, who envied the “husks that the swine did eat.” His heart turned toward his Heavenly Father, the kind God, who “knoweth our frame;” who “remembereth that we are dust,” and who “pitieth like as a father pitieth his children.” But he felt God had forsaken him because of his sin. How strange it is that with all his appeals, a whole volume of loving words written to prove it, God has such difficulty in making the sinner understand He *loves* him, loves *him*, though he be the vilest

sinner of them all; and watches with the tenderest care his every sorrow, his every want; the arms of His love are ever outstretched to receive him. It is the sinner who forsakes God, not God him. He longed to kneel down and pray to God in proper form, and ask his deliverance; but something held him back; he was ashamed to approach God in this deliberate way; it took the sting of mental pain to draw forth exclamations of prayer. For months he had had no privacy, save to draw within his mind, being constantly with those who cared not for God—who, if he cast his pearls before them, might turn again and rend him; and he had grown accustomed to only murmuring a few words of prayer after he lay down at night—words of prayer with which the coarse jests of some one near him often intermingled in his mind as they ascended to his Maker; words often so sleepily uttered they were *but words*, and lacked the soul of thought to enable them to fly upward to God. He does not kneel, but once more realizes the depth of his trouble, and from his heart murmurs, “O God, help me!” He meant only “help me

out of this difficulty." How well it is our God is long-suffering; but this prayer, out of a sinner's heart, ascended to a merciful God.

The day passed on, still Gerard lingered; he did not know where to go. He did not know where he was. He saw that he was hidden upon a flat but what appeared to be an unapproachable ledge of the mountain; how he came there he did not know. It had been dark some time when the sudden plunge of his horse brought him to this place of security; that is all he knows. He is safe here, and had as well stay as to start and not know where he is going.

"But," with a frown, "I can't stay here forever, and starve; this must end some way."

He sprung up in impatient desperation, and went toward his horse. As he did so, his horse looked up and over the ledge upon the brink of which he stood. Gerard's eyes followed those of his horse, and he saw many feet beneath them the road, and two men riding quietly by, unconscious of the man and horse over their heads. Gerard caught his horse and drew

him farther back from the edge, for fear they should be seen. When the men had passed, he examined his position still more closely—he had not looked over the edge before—and found from this point the road could be seen for a mile in either direction. Directly down to the road the cliff was perpendicular, rather projecting over the road; but on one side, screened from the road by projecting rocks, Gerard found a steep, irregular path winding down into a densely wooded hollow or gulch by the side of the road. It was not very well trodden, but unmistakably a path over which men had frequently passed. This, then, was not the unfrequented spot he thought it. Was he near the habitation of man after all? The thought gave him pleasure; then came the fear of discovery. He looked far and near; there was not the least sign of life anywhere. There was no path from the mountain above him; the cayuse had come down a very steep place; he could see the recent tracks by the side of the rock under which he slept. He was examining the place of his horse's descent when there suddenly appeared on the

height above him two of his former companions. They made an exclamation when they saw him, and came down as his horse had done.



Chapter VII.

THE COMPANION OF OUTLAWS.

“How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.” Psalm xi. 1, 2.

WHEN Gerard saw these men he felt sure that their object was to arrest him, or themselves to punish him for killing their friend. On the contrary, they seemed to be cordially glad to see him; shook him by the hand; congratulated him upon the deed he had done—he had freed them from a confederate they were constantly afraid would prove traitor to them. Gerard, utterly confounded by this salutation and this view of the matter, knew not what to answer, save to murmur, in a dull sort of way, that he did not think his deed one fit for congratulation. They asked how he came there. He told them he did not know; that he had given his horse the rein. Then one said, “O yes!” and the other said, “Sure enough!” and they glanced at the cayuse, which was looking at them in a very

knowing way, and then at each other. Gerard noticed this, but never thought to draw a conclusion. He asked them how they happened to find him.

"Never mind that now. We will tell you about it after awhile. It is dinner-time—well on to supper, I should say."

"And I'm as hungry as a wolf," added the other, loosening from his horse a large roll evidently hastily and quite clumsily put up, as though they had gathered up their dinner and brought it with them because they had not had time to eat it. It was a substantial meal, and so inviting to a man as hungry as Gerard was that he readily, I might say eagerly, accepted their invitation to join them. And now as the three sat together in good fellowship, they talked to Gerard as if he was one with them, as if his deed had separated him from mankind and bound him to themselves. They had always admired his powers and his "pluck," as they called it; and now they seemed determined to secure him as a confederate; so they revealed to him their own outlawed condition. As they talked on it slowly dawned on Gerard that these attract-

ive companions of his were the noted highway robbers for whose capture so great an effort was being made at that time.

Then the old miner's apparently unfounded suspicions, hinted to him; the fact that he had bought the horse of them; this was then their rendezvous—how convenient for their purposes; and innumerable little items recurred to his mind, instantaneously, to open his eyes fully to the circumstances surrounding him. Though only half satisfied, his appetite forsook him, and the food became revolting. These experienced men did not fail to see this, to see that he stood aghast with horror at their confessions. He turned deadly pale; then his face flushed with anger.

“Do you think I intend to be a thief, because I have been unfortunate enough to do a deed I did not intend to do?”

“Softly, young man, if you please; don't use words so brashly, or your health may suffer as much as your appetite appears to have done,” said one with a mocking smile, laying his hand on the arm of the other who with a scowl had placed his hand upon his pistol.

“‘Come, let us reason together’—I believe that is what your book says,” he adds, in the tone of an older friend who had learned to be forbearing with the foolish, impulsive anger of a younger one. “Pray tell us the difference between you and ourselves in the sight of the law; it can but hang us, as it certainly will you, if it lays hands on you.”

“I am not a thief,” said Gerard sullenly.

“Doubtless there is a nice distinction to be drawn between a thief and a murderer that many of our audience will fail to discover when we hang together for their edification.”

Gerard’s conscience—it truly “makes cowards of us all”—allowed him no answer to this sarcasm; and he was striving to see his way out of a dilemma that had now become more terrible.

This leader—“Captain” he was called—of highwaymen was a man of education and culture, though the life he led in the mountains gave him a rough exterior; when he chose he could throw it off, and, mingling among gentlemen as one of them, conceal his identity when he, as a notorious captain

of robbers, was himself under discussion. Besides, he could not be utterly debased—so Gerard thought, for he had seen him do deeds of kindness and bestow generous charity. But above all, the man had about him a species of magnetism that older men than Gerard were won by, regarding him a man worthy of their association. Even now, when he thought there was no mistaking the real character of the man and the nature of his pursuits, Gerard found it difficult to resist the fascination he had for him, and began to doubt his conclusions, so naturally drawn from circumstances, and from words somewhat ambiguous; for robbers or thieves are never known to call themselves by those names. The Captain saw his power over the young man, from whom he had not removed his penetrating eye.

“Well, now, my young friend,” and he smiled kindly and sadly, “pray tell me why you choose to insult your comrades in misfortune? Like yourself, we have been, by a reckless deed, driven from our fellow-men, among whom we dare not appear in proper person; we dare not remain among them

long enough to gain a livelihood, for fear of detection. We are hunted like wild beasts, as you now are and will be until you are found. We did not follow you to arrest you, as the 'agent' thought who demanded your arrest as soon as he saw the deed you had done. We deluded him; we threw him off your track, and sought you to protect and aid you. And here we found you in a starving condition. What would you have done if we had not come? You are now certainly in a safe retreat, but could you have staid here without food?"

Gerard's unappeased hunger acknowledged the argument. He bit his lip and remained silent; a sense of utter hopelessness was creeping over him.

"You see a man may be *driven* to a precarious mode of living; and if he can get that from the enemies who are pursuing him, it is but a warfare wherein all things are fair, by which we may save ourselves. Your only chance now is to cast your lot with ours. We will not ask you to do any thing your tender conscience shrinks from; but we must live, and so must you. I shall divide with you as long as you remain with

me; you shall be to me as a younger brother. No one can feel for you more than I, that this misfortune has overtaken you; and I would gladly see you go back to your friends if I thought you could dare do so with any hopes of safety. The die is cast, and you had as well meet your fate bravely as a man." He paused.

Gerard arose slowly, and seated himself on a stone apart from the others. He sat with his elbow on his knee, his head upon his hand, and tried to think. "A thief and a robber" were the only words his thoughts could form. The sun set and the moon arose slowly over the mountains, making a scene of fairy-like beauty, with soft white mists and dark shadows. And Gerard's thoughts went home to his mother; tears came to his eyes, and he was glad his back was toward the other men, that they could not see his emotion; they might think him weeping like a baby, instead of braving fate like a man. His attention thus drawn toward them, he heard their conversation, carried on in low tones. He had sat so long absorbed in thought they had almost forgotten his presence. He gathered that they

were expecting to capture rich booty at that place the next morning, and that two others were to join them at dawn, though he heard but little they said. Then they spoke of the necessity of committing him in some manner. As he was there upon the ground, he would either have to join them or be disposed of in some way. The Captain expressed himself kindly, and felt sure of him. The next day, he saw, would decide his fate. "What could he do?" "What other course was open to him?" The kind words of the Captain, spoken a little more distinctly than the rest of the conversation—Gerard had by a slight, unconscious movement betrayed that he was hearing what was said—inclined him to one who seemed so willing to befriend him.

"How could he help it? Fate was forcing him into this course," he thought, echoing the words spoken to him. "Fate? Surely God would not force him into an evil course? Why had it all happened?"

Conscience told him why. He saw that he had been the arbiter of his own fate. He had forsaken God; he had stood in the way of sinners; and now he was listen-

ing to the counsel of the ungodly. Then Gerard, with head bowed lower, began to pray to God to deliver him from the evil he had brought upon himself. The Captain came up, laid his hand upon his shoulder, and spoke cheerily to him. He sat down by his side, spoke of the beauty of the night, quoted beautiful poems, then glided off into a strain of conversation that with doubts and false logic, and touching, sad sentiments drawn from his own life, fascinated and so bewildered Gerard that he felt as if the lines between right and wrong, between the true and the false, were becoming mingled in inextricable confusion. Yet Gerard became quieted as one who takes a narcotic. He felt himself in the hands of an irresistible fate that was bearing him where it would; and with a dull, helpless apathy, when the Captain suggested they should go to sleep, he took an extra blanket they offered him and, lying down under the rock with them, soon fell asleep. When this was accomplished, the robbers, with a sense of relief, and "He is safe enough" from the Captain, were also soon sleeping soundly, for they had had but little rest the night before.

Now, through the stillness of the night, there comes to the ears of the sleeping boy a cry of anguish; it is his mother's voice, "My boy, O my boy!" With a throbbing heart, Gerard sprung up in a sitting posture. He was at the edge of the rock, and could see all around him. Every thing was as still as death; and the rays of the full moon were falling softly upon the peaceful earth. Farther under the rock he could see the two men sleeping heavily. What could it mean? It was his mother's voice. He must have been dreaming, though he could not recall the dream. He lay down, but did not sleep. He thought it all over again: "A companion of thieves and robbers; a murderer himself; but why should he be outlawed and become a robber? He did not mean to kill the man; wished he had been a moment slower, that he might have been the one to die and be free from all this misery. Poor mother! perhaps she had heard evil tidings of him, and was then praying for him, and calling in the anguish of the voice he had heard. He had been with these men, off and on, for weeks, for months; and he thought perhaps others

knew of their character, and regarded him as one of them; his friends, his mother, had heard it; he was disgraced, utterly disgraced." And as a dull sense of despair crept over him, he sunk to sleep again.

And again the voice of his unhappy mother sounded in his ears, clearer than before: "O Gerard, my boy, my boy!"

This time, fully aroused, he stood on his feet and looked around. The men were still sleeping. He went to the edge of the precipice, and looked up and down the road; there was nothing to be seen or heard. The night was still, unutterably still. The mountain-peaks far and near stood in solemn silence—motionless sentinels standing through ages past, through ages to come—never-wearying watchers on earth with heads uplifted toward heaven, waiting. There was a mystery in the stillness, in the ghostly contrast of moonlight and shadow, in the strange call of his mother's voice in this wild, still place. Could her spirit be hovering in the air near him? Awe-struck, Gerard bent forward and whispered aloud, "Mother." And the mountains softly echoing the word from one to another, whis-

pered, "Mother." He looked down upon the road, then back at the sleeping men. His active nature came once more into full play. With rapidity and clearness his mind took in his situation, as it had not done before. He resolutely determined he would risk himself in the hands of the law rather than voluntarily cast his lot among thieves. His mother had called him; he would go to her, and meet his fate bravely that way; but to live among thieves as one of them he would not. He did not intend to kill the man; and now remembering how near he himself had come to being killed, he thought perhaps, after all, he stood a good chance of acquittal. There was a flutter of hope in his heart, as no longer hesitating he determinately, but cautiously, threaded the narrow, winding path leading down the mountain-side. The moon in the zenith shone brilliantly; there was hardly a shadow on the path to conceal him from any one above. He could not of course take his horse; he could scarcely tread the steep path himself; and under his most cautious footing, a stone loosened and rolling made a noise that in the intense stillness of the night sounded

very loud to Gerard. One of the sleepers above stirred, but did not wake. Surely, God held their eyes sleeping, as he held the mouths of the lions shut that they might not hurt his servant Daniel. Yes, it was God who held their eyes that they might not waken; for at that moment, in the far-away home, was not Gerard's mother on her knees, with arms uplifted to her God, praying in the anguish of her heart for her wandering boy, from whom she had heard nothing for a month, save, accidentally, a vague rumor of his being in evil company? On this night a terrible, unaccountable dread took possession of her soul and would not let her sleep, but kept her on her knees in prayer. And what more precious in the sight of God than such a mother's prayer? Now a strange peace and rest from God comes into her heart; she feels her prayer is answered, her boy is safe; and trusting, she lies down to sleep while he is creeping down the mountain-side. The moon, like a lamp held on high by the hand of God that the boy committed to his care might see his way in safety down the dangerous, unfamiliar pathway,

cast its rays far down into the dell below. But should his sleeping enemy awaken before he reaches the shadow of the trees, there will be nothing to hide him from his quick vengeance!



Chapter VIII.

A MOTHER'S PRAYER ANSWERED.

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matt. xxi. 22.

READER, were you still anxious about Gerard when you left him upon the mountain-side? I hope not. But if you were, why so? Did not I tell you of his mother's trustful prayer? and have you never read the text that heads this chapter? Yes, and you believe it. O how strange is an unbelieving belief! O that Christian mothers could always *realize* the power of a *trusting* prayer! What are the "keys to the kingdom of heaven," given the disciples of the Lord, if they be not the prayers of faith, that alone can open it to ourselves or to those we seek to save? If this key is in your hand, you have but to open and enter into this kingdom, into the presence of Divine Majesty, assured of his favor, *knowing* "that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

And did not poor distracted Gerard offer up his own feeble petitions? and did you

think God would not pity the poor boy because he had sinned? This is a story, and you did not know what turn I would give it? Why *I* see no way out of it, when I tell you of a prayer offered in faith and trust, except to have an answer follow it, unless I am ready to say God speaks not truly—which I could not do, for I *know* he is true on my own knowledge. He *is* truth; and his tender mercies are over all. Indeed, if he were *not true and merciful*, he could not be God. O merciful, tender, loving Father, why should your children ever doubt you?

Of course Gerard gained the road safely; and many miles away, he was walking as if possessed of seven-league boots, when the Captain—who really liked the young man, and was determined to secure him as a friend, knowing that otherwise he would be compelled to destroy him—and his companion were awakened by the arrival of the other two men expected to assist in the robbery planned. Intent on business, they did not miss Gerard at first, then the object they had in view kept them on the spot. They did not know that from the

few words he had caught Gerard had surmised from whence the expected bounty was to come; for they had merely alluded to the fact that it was coming. But as it grew late in the day and it did not come, they began to fear that Gerard had not only escaped out of the meshes of the net they thought held him safe, but had revealed their designs. Then their own safety was to be thought of.

Gerard had met a man going in the direction from which he had surmised the travelers were coming, and sent a warning of the danger that awaited them; though he did not reveal the hiding-place of the man who professed a desire to show him a kindness, and whose manner had been kind. He felt that he would be acting like a traitor if he did. But he had reason to regret that he had not done so some time afterward, when he heard of a bloody robbery committed at that too convenient place.

Gerard's plan was to seek an asylum with, and advice from, his shrewd friend the old miner. It was not until the dusk of the following evening that he reached

the old man's cabin, and found it dark and the owner gone; though the fire on the hearth showed he had not been long away, and would return. Foot-sore, and exhausted with fatigue and hunger, with the freedom of a friend in the mountains Gerard rolled over into one of the rough bunks, and was soon fast asleep.

He did not wake when an hour later the rough, kind old face of his friend peered into his. With a grunt of satisfaction he murmured, "Poor boy!" He saw the too visible traces of suffering upon his face.

"He looks hungry enough to eat all the flapjacks I can cook before he wakes up;" and he proceeded forthwith to prepare a good meal for his sleeping guest. And it must have been a sweet savor in the nostrils of the hungry sleeper, for when the busy cook looked around Gerard was lying awake looking at him.

"Why, halloo! ready for supper?"

To this cheery greeting Gerard sighed heavily, as he rose wearily up.

The old man then faced suddenly around on Gerard, and said: "That man was not dead."

Gerard stared at him. "That man was not dead?"

"That man you floored; he was only stunned; he— What's up? What's the matter with the boy?"

Gerard had sunk back almost fainting. The old man handed him some water and turned away in silence; put the supper he had prepared in his rough fashion on the rude table; drew up a stool and sat down, apparently not noticing Gerard, who was making great efforts to conquer the emotion that in his exhausted state had completely overcome him.

"Come, draw up," said the old man, in a matter-of-fact way, but with a very evident tone of sympathy in his voice.

With a quivering lip and irrepressible tears of gratitude—how good God had been to save him from blood-guiltiness!—Gerard took his seat at the table opposite the old man, who did not look up at him; but he went on with his story, as if not interrupted.

"I came in just before the fracas; when the other parties rushed to the door after you, I examined the man on the floor and found he was n't no more dead than you

were, and may be would live longer, if you went on at the rate you went out, with that crew after you; as if that rascal's life was worth an honest man's! I knew well enough them men as went after you had their own reasons for getting out of the way so quick. And I knew that that fellow you knocked down ought to be dead if he was n't. But I knowed you had been brung up so tender you'd have no peace of mind any more if that rascal did n't come back to life. I got some water and went to work at him. He was hard to bring round, but I fetched him, and kept at him until I saw he was all right. Then I felt like knocking him down again myself, the rascally thief!"

Geraïd laughed; he began to feel like himself again, and thanked his friend.

The old man now looked him full in the face. "What on earth made you skin out that way anyhow, like a bounced rabbit out of the bushes? If you had had sense enough to stand your ground, you'd have done well enough, instead of tearing off like mad, as if you thought somebody was goin' to string you up to the next tree. Every-

body seed the man shoot at you; and it ain't so easy no ways to hang a man in these parts, if he deserves it—that is, if he ain't skeered to death.”

He owed his young friend a grudge on that point, and felt in a better humor about it when Gerard explained it was not the fear of hanging but the horror of having taken a life that started him; that he did not think of the evil consequences to himself until just before he found he was pursued. He told the whole story to the old man, who listened attentively, with ejaculations of various kinds. The “Humph!” at the mention of his mother’s voice calling him, showed him deeply impressed.

“Guardian angels, boy—your guardian angels, and your mother’s prayers, most like. You had better go to sleep again now, and go to town in the morning and tend to your business—Mr. McLeod’s back and started in again; and go to church; they’ve got one now—[he did not tell that he had contributed generously to its erection]—and as likely a young parson as I ever see. Heard him myself once, and am going again. I am glad they have got a

church for the likes of you; and it does an old sinner like me good to go once in awhile; it feels sorter home-like." The old man wrapped himself in his blanket and lay down. Gerard lay down again too, but not before he had knelt reverently, and in a heart-felt prayer given God thanks for his long-suffering mercies. Before he went to sleep, by the light of God's mercy so signally revealed to him, he reviewed the past few months of his life. How changed he felt since that day he left his mother so confident of the bright future before him, and so sure that he would stand steadfast in his Christian profession! He recalled those first Sundays when he felt so lonely and at a loss without the Christian service to which he had been accustomed from infancy; and now he scarcely knew that to-morrow would be Sunday. How indifferent he had gradually become to the privileges of the Sabbath-day! Then recalling the words the old miner had just spoken—"I am glad they've got a church for the likes of you"—Gerard fell asleep with words of gratitude on his lips.

Yes, that was the turning-point of his

life; if there had been a church in the place—if he had attended worship instead of trying otherwise to entertain himself on the Sabbath-day—he believed he would have been true to the name of Christ. How well Mrs. Johnson seemed to divine where his danger lay! Her husband's fate had opened her eyes. He had thought she need not fear for him—he was in no danger of becoming a drunkard; but had he not gone into courses as evil? and but for the goodness of God his happiness would have been wrecked for life.

There is a turning-point in every life, it is said; and in Gerard's life it had certainly been in this thriving little town, where he had sought to make a livelihood, and where God had no house to dwell in, no house wherein he might gather his children to hear of his love, and to show sinners the way of salvation. Alas! many a time when there is a church where Christians gather Sabbath after Sabbath, it is the turning-point toward evil in the life of a stranger, a youth taught to revere the name of God, when he is not made to feel at home in their midst—when he is allowed

to seek fellowship and affection from those whose influence leads him away from God. Why should not a young man go into places of evil resort? Because by going into the midst of temptation he may be led astray more easily. For the same reason a young man should go to church, that being in the midst of the worship of God, hearing words of encouragement, he can be more easily led into the way of righteousness.

This is about the substance of what the old miner thought, though he would not have put it in those words, when he awoke the next morning still rejoicing that there was a church for Gerard to go to, and determined to take him there that very day.

He aroused him at day-break, saying: "It's time to be stirring if we would make it to meetin' this mornin'; and as I make it out, you'll have to get to town in time to fix up, and put on your store-clothes."

These simple words brought to Gerard's mind the striking difference between himself now and on those pleasant Sabbath-days that seemed so far away in the past, when he went to Church at home and enjoyed worshipping God with those he loved.

He certainly was a dirty, unkempt-looking creature now; and what was worse, he felt his soul was as unkempt and as soiled as his clothes. There certainly ought to be as much satisfaction in having, by the grace of God, a clean, white soul as a clean body and fresh clothes. Gerard had been accustomed from boyhood, by keeping near the Saviour, to feeling within him an unpolluted soul, a character free from taint—as his bright, frank, open face had shown to every stranger—winning the heart of the uncultured but honest old man by his side. Now a sense of shame came over him, he averted his face from his friend, and thought bathing and fresh clothes would not make him clean enough to enter the sanctuary of the holy God, in whose sight even the heavens are impure. He felt that he would be a hypocrite in his own eyes if he went among Christians as one of them. I am afraid, in this way, Satan would have made him shrink from going back to the house of God, if his friend had not carried him along with that take-for-granted-you-are-going manner that has taken many a man along—sometimes in the right way,

sometimes in the wrong. And the seemingly careless old man was only going because he had made up his mind to get this boy back into the right way, for he had, of course, not failed to notice the difference between Gerard when he first saw him and as he now appeared, gloomy, haggard, worn with mental suffering and physical deprivation. He felt totally unfit to instruct any one in the way he should go, so he made up his mind, in a crude sort of way, that if he got the boy to church he would there find what he needed.

"It's church, it's church," he said to himself, "that'll do the thing for him. I'll carry him right along back to church; then he'll be all right, as I make it out."

Wise old man! to take the sinner back to God who alone can regenerate the soul of man. He did not censure or lecture Gerard—he did not feel good enough for that; and the chances are it is well he did not; for, owing to the depravity of human nature, perhaps, men—and women too, for the matter of that—are not especially fond of, indeed are inclined to feel a little rebellious under, cold-blooded criticisms and

moral lectures delivered dry so. It is better to love and to lead them; that is God's way. So this simple-hearted, rough old man is wiser than he knows. He has a tender spot in his heart for this brave, bright boy gone astray; in an unpretending way he reverences purity, truth, goodness—God, the Bible, and the Church that seems to him the embodiment of it all. This idea has been more deeply impressed on his mind by the beneficial effects already seen from the one lately erected; then naturally he would take the erring boy to church, there to find "what an old sinner like me," as he said to himself, "can't larn him."

He goes himself, that the boy may go with him. And as they go along, he commends the young man for the "pluck and honesty that made him determine to face the condemnation of the law rather than live among thieves when he had found them out; and he was a lucky fellow that his man didn't die; so now there was nothing for the law nor nobody else to get on to him about, as he could see." Kind, artful old soul, he was determined Gerard should not go into town with that hang-head, guilty

look, for "them self-righteous sinners to be a flingin' at him, as they always did when Christian folks did n't do as they oughter. He was a long way better than any of them now, if he was n't all right yet." So he put the best light on what he had done, and succeeded in relieving Gerard's mind of the shamefacedness of being in a scrape—of being degraded in the eyes of men. Self-respect restored, he became more buoyant; he did not mind meeting people now.

Then the old man added, "It must have been your mother's prayers as sent them guardin' angels." That was a word "fitly spoken." He was setting the boy's mind in the right track without seeming to do it. "A mother is a great thing, I can tell you, boy; I had one of my own onct—in course I did—and she was as prayerful a woman as I ever see." Then he stopped, puzzled to know why her prayers for him had never been answered. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter iii. 9.)

Chapter IX.

THE NEW CHURCH.

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” Rev. iii. 5.

WHEN they reached the boarding-house the old miner waited in the bar-room, while Gerard went to his room to make ready for church. He waited with the feeling that he had been set to watch over the boy until he got him to church, then it would be all right, as he expressed it—why, or how, he made no effort to divine. While he waited, however, he took care to rehearse Gerard’s story to quite a bevy of listeners, in such a manner that before he finished the youth came to be looked upon, in some measure, as a hero.

They are in the church now. A nice little clean church it is, only three Sundays old. It is a plain frame church with unpainted pews, but cozy and comfortable. Quite a respectable congregation is gathered. Mrs. Johnson is there, near the front,

looking feeble and patient but hopeful, for by her side is her beloved husband, though evident traces of recent drinking are visible on his face. Half-way back, Mr. McLeod is seated, in true Scotch-Presbyterian style, looking straight before him, erect, dignified, and reverential. Far back, near the door, is Gerard, wondering if there could be that many Christians in town, and feeling like a stranger in the house of his Father. Now, low and tremulous, but with pathetic tenderness, in a weak female voice, comes the hymn:

“Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee!”

Several voices take it up and support the tune, but catch the low pathos. Gerard's heart is stirred with a quick, deep emotion. He cannot sing; but the notes of the long imprisoned music that sunk so deep into his heart years ago now come floating up—like the voice of his soul plaintively pleading for its God—out of the depths of his being; bring in their train the fondest memories of home, of mother, of God.

Strange! is it not? Yet we, all of us, know it is true that a strain of music, the

scent of a flower, even the breath of a passing summer breeze, as by a touch of magic, will at times recall some scene in the far-away past. Why that particular scene, we know not; but, long forgotten, it comes back from somewhere out of the mysterious store-house wherein the immortal soul is laying up its treasures for eternity. How careful we should be that the treasure is fit for heaven!

Thus it is with Gerard. A little boy again, he sits by his mother's side in church. He sees the people behind him, the good little woman in front, the dog at his feet; he hears his mother's low, sweet voice joining in with the singing; he nestles close to her—his hand in hers, so soft and warm. Then suddenly he remembers the anguish in her voice when it called him upon the mountain. They were singing the verse:

“Though, like the wanderer,
The sun gone down,
Darkness be over me,
My rest a stone;
Yet in my dreams I'd be
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee.”

How far away from God he had been that night upon the mountain. Though he had prayed, it had only been for deliverance from the difficulties around him, not because he missed the communion with God that had been his joy for so many years. It was this world he had thought of, and his good name in the eyes of those who loved him on earth. He did not think how he had grieved the Holy Spirit by not keeping his heart "unspotted from the world." God had in tender pity, removed those objects of terror that had filled him with dread. Now his soul felt the barrier, the cloud, between it and its God. It thirsted for the living fountain whence it had so often drawn the pure water of life, hungered for the heavenly manna upon which it had fed. It pined for the ever-present love of its Saviour, even as his heart longed to be by the side of the mother who loved him, to feel her gentle touch, to hear her voice, to see those eyes so full of tender, all-enduring love for him:

"Nearer, my God, to thee!"

Deeper and more intense became the sense of the goodness and love of God; and

how far off he was from Him! He could restrain his emotion no longer, but, leaning his head upon the pew in front of him, wept unreservedly; mind, heart, and soul pleading for the presence of the God he had wandered away from, and whose loss he now felt so keenly. He feared nothing now; he only wanted once more to feel there was no shadow of evil between him and the Saviour who loved him; he was regardless of the service, forgetful of every thing save his desire to be restored to full fellowship with Christ. His friend the old miner, sitting by him, watched him with quiet satisfaction: "I knowed it; I knowed it was church he needed; he'll be all right by and by."

The preacher, who had gotten well into his sermon, now called out in a louder tone: "Why do not *you* come to the Saviour? *you* have sins to be forgiven as well as the vilest sinners."

The old miner, aroused from his reverie, looked up to find the preacher's finger, accidentally as far as his intention was concerned, but providentially, pointing directly at him. He felt startled: "I wonder if he means me?"

“Yes, I mean *you*,” continued the preacher, really preaching at Mr. McLeod. “Why do not *you* come to the Saviour? He died for *you*. He pleads with *you* this day. O why will you refuse him? Why will you reject his love? Have you then, indeed, *no* sins to repent of?”

“Lots of ’em, lots of ’em,” thought the contrite old man; “more nor that boy thar; and I’ve been thinkin’ of settin’ him right. I am an old hypocrit, that’s what I am.”

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ——”

“White as snow,” murmured the old man; “that cleans ’em away mighty clean—not a spect left; if it’s clean snow, he means, and I reckon it is. Humph! that would make an old sinner like me innocent as a newborn babe. How would it feel, I wonder? mighty happy I reckon. White as snow? couldn’t be no whiter nor that.”

“If you would receive the mercy of God, you must ask for it ——”

“That’s fair, and little enough.”

“And you have but to ask, and ye shall receive ——”

“Little enough for a man to do. Little

enough, and pretty certain about gettin' it, too; if that's in the Book, for it ain't like God A'mighty to say he'll do a thing and go back on his word; I wouldn't do that myself. He'll do what he says, an' no mistake. I'll bet on that. He'll be fair and squar."

"Then, come as a son to his father; *ask*, ask for the bread of life, that you may live ——"

"Bless me if I don't do it! I'll *ask*—that's *my* part—and he'll do *his* part; no fear about that. He's a squar one to deal with."

"You live in a mining region, my friends. If a gold mine of priceless value were offered you free, given you for the asking, would you delay to go and take possession of it? ——"

"You bet we wouldn't, not a man alive of us;" and he emphasized his thoughts with a quick little movement in his seat.

"Then, why should you delay when the kingdom of heaven is offered you? Is it not of more value than gold, than the most precious jewels? ——"

"That's the fact!" and the old man

straightened himself up as if ready for action.

"Then seek for it to-day; come to Jesus, that you may find it; come and let us pray with you. Sing friends, sing, "Come to Jesus."

They sung with fervor.

Again the preacher called, through the refrain, for sinners to come forward; for the backslidden to come and renew their fellowship with Christ.

Gerard arose and went forward.

"I'll go, too," thought his old friend, now deeply moved; "yes, I'll do it; I'll go with the boy;" and he followed him.

Gerard sunk upon his knees at the altar. The old man paused, looked embarrassed; it did not come as natural to him as to Gerard.

The preacher took him by the hand: "Do you want to be free from your sins, my friend?"

"Yes, parson; that's about the size of it," said he.

"Then kneel, and ask God to forgive you."

"I'll try," thought the old man, and

kneeled awkwardly down by the side of Gerard.

Whispering, "Pray with me," the earnest man of God knelt by the humble old man who, like a little child, was seeking to enter the kingdom of God, and poured forth a heart-felt prayer to the God of mercy. The old man became more and more deeply contrite, as he followed the prayer with all his heart, repeating the words in a low tone. He realized fully that he was asking God to do for him something that he could do, and had promised to do. He asked, nothing doubting, and when the prayer was ended took for granted God had done what he said he would—his simple-hearted faith and child-like trust receiving their reward of joy. He never doubted afterward God had received him that day, and went a long way to join a Baptist church, because that was his mother's Church; and he believed it was her prayers that brought him right at last; besides, he "liked this thing of being *washed all over*." He meant to quote, "Our bodies washed with pure water." When he arose from prayer, he turned toward Gerard, who quiet, tearful, and smil-

ing, stood by his side. He gave him a hearty shake of the hand.

"I knowed it was church you needed. It was church I needed, too; but I never knowed that, the old hypocrit that I was."

God knew better. He knew the old man forgot himself in his desire to save the boy "away from home" that he had determined to befriend. So God blessed him with the gift of his own salvation. Trying to bring others to Christ is a pretty sure way to bring and to keep ourselves there.

A regular Methodist hand-shaking took place. Mrs. Johnson, rejoiced to have Gerard back again, introduced him to the pastor, as the boy she had told him of, who greeted him with the warmth and cordiality of an old friend. She introduced him to many others, who were kind in word and manner; and Gerard thought all would be different now from those first churchless Sundays he had spent without Christian encouragement—regretfully wishing he could have been spared the trials of the last three months that came so near proving fatal to him. As they came out, Gerard found Mr. McLeod waiting at the door for him, and

received from him a cordial grasp of the hand which, from this quiet, earnest man, Gerard knew meant a great deal. When his new friends left him with many professions of interest that they did not forget, Mr. McLeod walked by his side in silence. He had some messages to deliver, from Gerard's mother, sisters, and friends, whom he had seen a week or two before, that he told by degrees, not dwelling too much upon his mother's anxiety. Then he spoke a few words on his own account, that, though said with no apparent emotion, showed how deep was his interest, and how self-reproachful he felt for the seeming indifference of the past.

Gerard found letters waiting for him; one from Annie beginning in a high state of indignation that he did not write and relieve her mother's painful anxiety, and winding up with a rush of love that showed how her own heart was aching; a line from little Mary:

"Please, brother, write to mamma or come home one; she cries about you, and calls you her boy, every night, when she thinks we are asleep. Your little sister, Mary."

She did not show this almost illegible little letter to any one, but sealed it up herself with a great deal of dignity, feeling that she had done all that was necessary to bring her brother or a letter one; and when she saw it addressed and mailed to him, she sat down with patient certainty of its taking effect. There were several loving, patient, but anxious letters from his mother, that Gerard would hardly have been human if he had not shed tears over, and hasten to send by the next mail a long, loving confession of all he had passed through, and in explanation that he had scarcely been near a post-office for weeks.

What joy, what gratitude this letter brought to his mother and sisters, any mother or sister may well imagine. God bless our mothers! How many trials they pass through for us! and how all-enduring is their love! Yet our Lord says a mother can more easily forget the child of her love than he can forget his people. "Yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

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A few years have passed. Gerard has a

home of his own; and the "demure little girl" is his wife, and her placid, sweet temperament is a great safeguard to him. They are very happy, and have a great many friends, but the one friend most welcome to their home is the old miner, who, though still devoted to Gerard, never fails to feel awed and shamefaced in the presence of his wife, though, strange to say, he can talk freely to Gerard's mother, who is very grateful to him, and understands how to draw out his crudely expressed wisdom and keen insight into human nature.

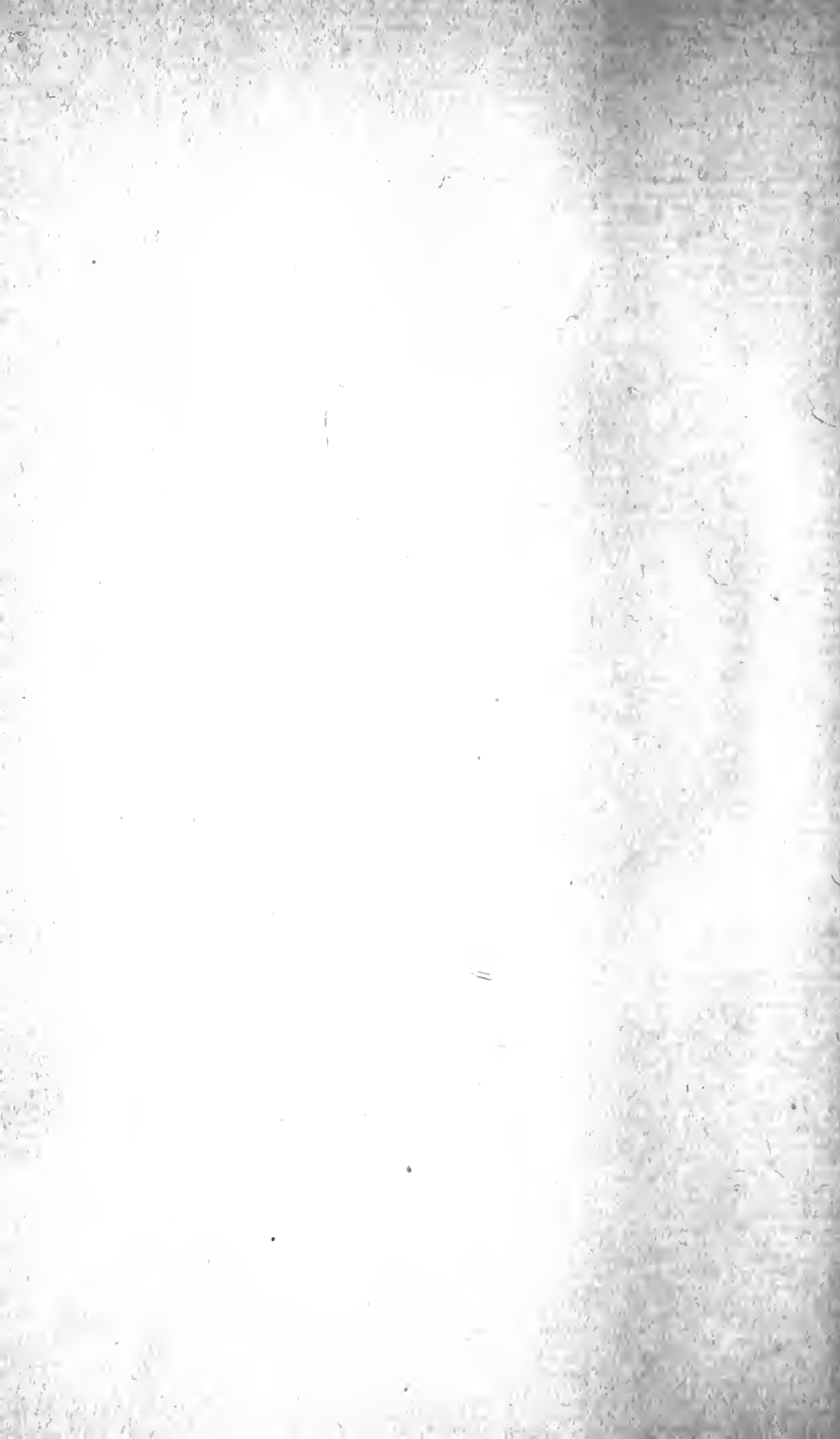
Gerard's mother and little Mary make their home part of the time at Gerard's, and part of the time at Mr. McLeod's; for Mr. McLeod married Annie, though twenty years younger than himself, and they are living next door to Gerard. When this event took place no one would hear to any thing but the mother coming West too, and living as she does. Neither Annie nor Gerard will agree to her making her home entirely in the house of the other, so she has a room with each one; and as there is no fence between the yards, it is all like one place any way.

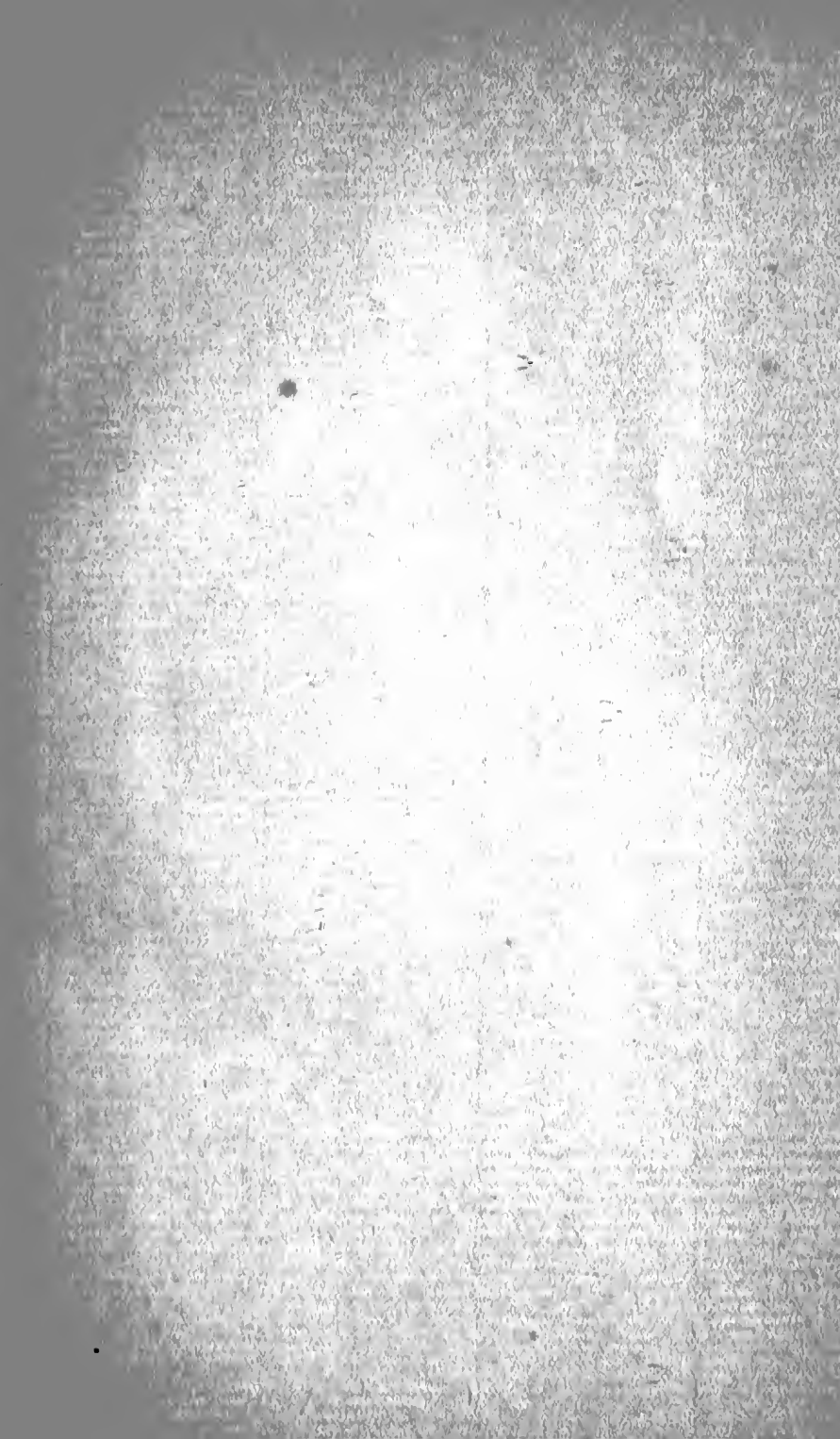
What wonder that the psalmist prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting?" Gerard sometimes says now that he thinks, after all, it was the goodness of God that *tried* him, and showed him the *wicked way* that was in him—showed him where his weak points lay, that he might be more guarded. And he often speaks gratefully of the earnest efforts of Annie to rescue him from danger, by having a church built in the town where he lived; for, they say, that more to the vehement earnestness with which she threw herself into this work than to any other single agency may be attributed the building of that church. And the noble, earnest girl—now a happy, true Christian and devoted wife—says, "How good God is!" when she tells how her husband's heart had been touched and filled with the resolve to delay no longer in seeking salvation, and, already fixed in the habits of morality, became a steadfast Christian, through the influence of the sermon that converted the old miner; and when Mrs. Johnson tells her how her

husband, wavering back and forth in his struggle with the terrible giant drunkenness, had finally become a consistent Christian by the grace of God, through the agency of the preaching of the gospel in the church she aided so largely in building; and when Gerard, whose special mission seems to be to look after the stranger youths who come to town, and take them to church, tells her how difficult it would be—almost impossible—to watch over them, if there were no regular church-service to invite them to, no appointed place where they could meet and make the acquaintance of Christian friends, where they could hear the praises of God sung and his gospel preached; and when her quiet husband, one day when the church-bell was ringing, said to her with a smile, “Listen, Annie, how loudly you are calling sinners to repentance,” she looked up at him in surprise. Then he put his arm around her, and said: “I never hear that bell that I do not think how much my noble little wife has done for the salvation of souls; for through the preaching of the gospel in that church already have many souls been brought to

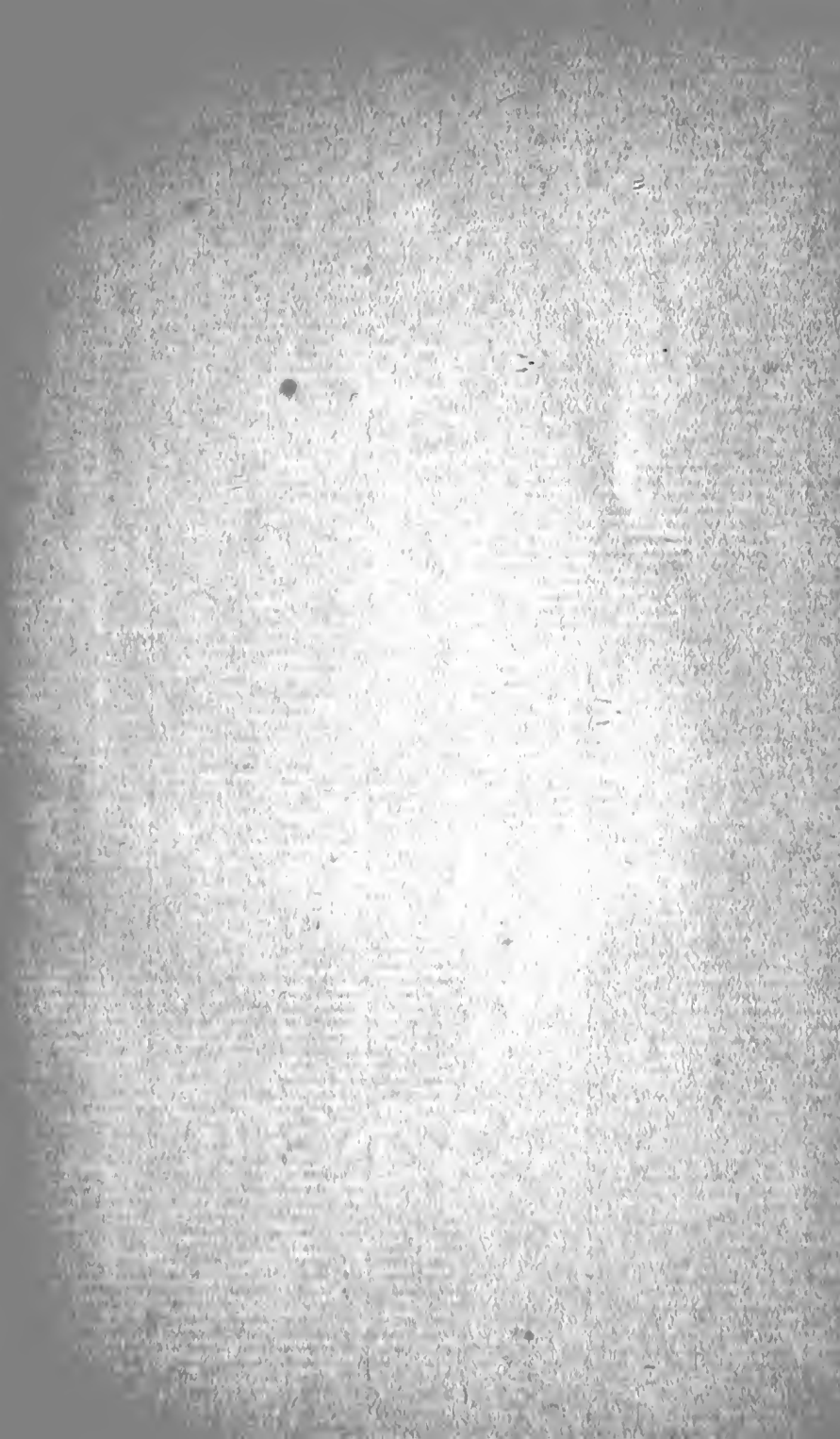
Christ, many saved from temptations to evil; but in years to come, who but God can tell how vast may be the number of souls who, responding to that call as it peals forth Sabbath after Sabbath, may be brought to know, as their salvation, the Saviour of mankind?"











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